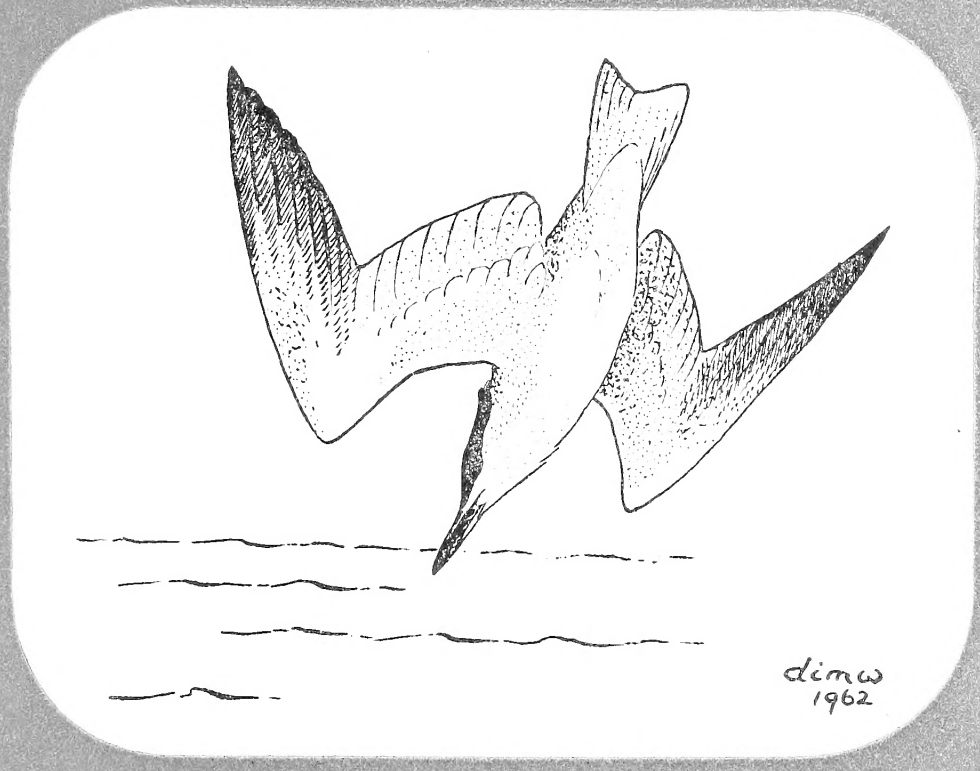


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# THE LONDON BIRD REPORT

**NUMBER TWENTY-SIX**  
**FOR**  
**1961**



Published January 1963 by  
**THE LONDON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**  
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# THE LONDON BIRD REPORT

Number 26, 1961

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Published January, 1963, by

**THE LONDON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

## Recording Arrangements

The Society's Area is bounded by a circle of 20 miles radius centred on St. Paul's Cathedral. The recorders, whose names and addresses are given below, welcome records from members and non-members. It materially assists the speedy entering of records if the following points are observed.

1. Please use the Society's recording sheets, which can be obtained from the Recorders. Submit records for North of the Thames, South of the Thames, and Inner London on separate sheets.
2. Please enter records by species in the Wetmore Order, which is used in this report. It is particularly requested that date order should not be used, as this inevitably slows down the work of transferring entries from the recording sheets to the card index which is used in the preparation of the report.
3. Please submit copies of field notes for all records of rare or unusual species.
4. Completed recording sheets should be submitted in August for the period January to July, in November for the period August to October, and in the first week of January for November and December.

Copies of the B.T.O. Field List of British Birds, which is in the Wetmore Order, may be obtained from Mrs. M. Waller, 77 Princes Avenue, W.3, price 6d. each, plus postage 2½d. each; 6 copies, post free.

### Recorders

Inner London	...	...	...	...	A. D. TOMLINS, 29 Gerard Road, Barnes, S.W.13
South of the Thames and River Thames					B. A. MARSH, 19 Grasmere Avenue, Kingston Vale, S.W.15
North of the Thames	...	...	...	c/o	B. L. SAGE, 11 Deepdene, Potters Bar, Middx.





survey, also referred to in the last report has been completed and a paper by A. Gibbs appears on p. 104. The habitat is unattractive and the results in this paper may therefore seem disappointing, but they have involved a great deal of hard work on the part of the organizer and are well worth study. The role of these tips in attracting gulls to the Area, especially the larger species, is an important one and a more intensive study of selected tips would be valuable.

In addition to the above two studies Stanley Cramp contributes a report on the Mute Swan census and S. D. G. Stephens a note on the activities of Beddington Ringing Station in 1961. The London Migration Watch has been continued and members were invited to assist in surveys organized in 1961 by the British Trust for Ornithology. An account of research studies in which the co-operation of members is specially requested is given on p. 6 and the Research Sub-Committee will always welcome other suggestions for studies in the London Area.

One more paper appears in this issue, an account by Miss E. P. Brown of the birds of Holland Park, which she has been studying for four years and a book review also appears.

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## The Year

### JANUARY TO APRIL

The first Greenish Warbler to be recorded in the London Area mentioned at the end of "The Year" in the last *London Bird Report* continued to draw a stream of observers to Perry Oaks S.F. up to the end of February. Reports from eleven localities of wintering Chiffchaffs included four at that same sewage farm where the ornithological bounty was completed by a Bearded Tit. Elsewhere the winter interest was less sensational. With 70 Goldeneye in the Area a new peak figure was reached. White-fronted Geese were seen at Rye Meads S.F. where 12 flew west to east on January 18th, and at Epsom skeins totalling a hundred—67 definitely identified as Whitefronts—offered a thrilling sight. At Barn Elms Res. a herd of 11 Bewick Swans on January 18th reflected the unusual numbers of wild swans that were spread over the eastern side of England between the Thames and Derwent. The passerine quality was maintained throughout the month with Great Grey Shrikes at Fishers Green and Leatherhead and the Bearded Tits, established since October 1960 at Walthamstow, still numbered 15 in the middle of February.

Early in March the first Garganey appeared, a pair at Barn Elms Res. on the 4th, followed by three at Rainham and a pair at Old Parkbury towards the end of the month which also saw the early arrivals of a Sand Martin at Fetcham Mill on the 12th and a Little Stint at Swanscombe on the 25th. The cock Yellow Wagtail at Beddington S.F., however, had

overwintered as had a Greenshank at Swanscombe. Reed Buntings and Little Grebes were unusually numerous at Rye Meads S.F., some 250 of the former and 38 of the latter being quite remarkable gatherings. On the 15th a sub-adult Kittiwake was an unexpected sighting from the top of Primrose Hill. The early arrival of some summer migrants included Wheatears from two well watched areas, Ruxley gravel pits and Brent Res., on the 12th, and one on Primrose Hill in the heart of the bricks and mortar on the 15th.

On April 11th a cock Pied Flycatcher in the Dulwich Woods area was joined next day by a hen. Frequent observation of the pair until the first week in June suggested that breeding might take place but no evidence of a nest was forthcoming and this must remain a tantalising and unresolved possibility. Other exceptionally early arrivals were Sedge Warblers on the 8th and 9th and four Reed Warblers on the 16th. In the last week of the month Black Terns were passing through in ones and twos, the peak of the spring passage, when 260 were reported, coming on May 13th, a Saturday, which appears to have been the peak date throughout the country.

A considerable variety of tern species makes a welcome appearance in this Report with eight recorded including no less than three "firsts" for the London Area, a Whitewinged Black on spring passage at Queen Mary Res., on May 13th and 14th, a Whiskered at Staines late in June and two Caspians on the return passage seen at Lea Valley reservoirs. The two Roseates at Barn Elms on July 18th were only our third record.

#### THE BREEDING SEASON

During May, Redpolls were discovered on the heaths and commons of Surrey in bigger numbers than usual, while on much the same habitat the Grasshopper Warblers seemed to be losing their hold, which in recent years has become more and more tenuous, so that a population never very large was reduced to something like half. Little Ringed Plovers on the other hand maintained their numbers and may be expected to continue with us as the endless search for gravel for concrete for new buildings provides them with fresh habitats as fast as the old ones are destroyed.

The breeding season was a good one for chats though numbers were not high. A few pairs of Stonechats raised broods and others were suspected but not confirmed. Whinchats also brought off five broods for certain with eight more possibles. Neither species, however, was reported nesting from our part of Kent nor was the Whinchat successful in the Surrey sector. Redstarts were again in strength in the old timber of Broxbourne and Epping Forest, Richmond Park produced five pairs and on Hampstead Heath a pair raised three young, an agreeable sign of the improvement in the status of this species. It was also a season that suited the Longtailed Tit, with some remarkably large family parties to give delight.

At Cripplegate, in the shadow of St. Paul's, a Wren again made history! The first pair to breed, perhaps drawn from the small winter population, were watched carrying food to, and faecal sacs from a nest, though it was never exactly pinpointed. Their neighbours, the Black

Redstarts, had less success and amid the rising towers of concrete produced no more than a third of last year's total of 16 young. A brighter side to the picture of Inner London's breeding birds was presented by the two pairs of Blackcaps in Holland Park and the pair in Regent's Park that completed their nest though unfortunately disturbance finally drove them elsewhere. Once again the Grey Wagtails at the brewery in Whitechapel raised two broods and were "shot" in colour for the forthcoming film *London Birds*. On the relatively unspoilt fringes of the Area about 16 pairs were located, a small but encouraging increase in the breeding population. Yellowhammers again bred on Hampstead Heath and Nuthatches in Holland Park. That very tricky species, the Marsh Warbler, is reported in the Systematic List as breeding at Rye Meads S.F., but the criteria for identification are so critical that the record must be qualified by a hint of doubt.

The numbers of owls and birds of prey in the breeding season were of special interest since these are species that may well suffer indirectly from the use of toxic chemicals. While there is no direct evidence that where numbers have fallen, as for example in the Little Owl and the Sparrow Hawk, the cause is toxics, it is worth noting that the national figures for these two species show a marked decline and it is now known that toxics can turn up in the eggs of some raptors thereby rendering them infertile.

On the other hand, Barn Owls were found in 21 breeding localities, a substantial increase over last year when a note appeared in the Systematic List alerting observers to the status of this species. Is the Kestrel decreasing? A trend, that seems to suggest that it is, might be well worth watching. Other records of high summer were a flock of 800 Lapwings over Rye Meads on June 3rd, a Temminck's Stint at Holmthorpe on the 4th, a Rook in Finsbury Circus on the 23rd and a Grey Plover in the sparkling elegance of summer dress at Girling Res. on the 30th.

#### JULY TO SEPTEMBER

The three Stone Curlews that flew over Rye Meads on July 12th were obviously early passage migrants, a sign that soon the great movement of autumn migration would be on the wing. By the end of the month Turnstone, Curlew, Whimbrel, Green Sandpipers, Greenshank, Little Stint and other waders were coming South again. Yet, on the 30th, at Ruxley gravel pit a Hoopoe brought the month to a close with a reminder that not all post-breeding movement is strictly away from the north.

By late July, Goldfinches were exceptionally abundant and from August to early October were noted in flocks up to 500 in the more open places, the 70 in Holland Park on October 11th making an unexpectedly attractive charm for W.8.

Before the end of August, however, three unusual species had paid brief visits. Outstanding among these was London's first Melodious Warbler at Rye Meads on the 12th and 13th. At Sunbury-on-Thames a Rose Coloured Starling remained for four days, its behaviour strongly supporting the contention that it was, indeed, a wild bird. The Caspian

Tern at King George V Res. on the 26th and 27th referred to earlier, was in fact the second of the two birds of this species to be seen.

Autumn migration was again a special subject of enquiry. The London Migration Watch, off to so fine a start in 1960, was continued in the year under review and provided observers keen enough to leave their beds at dawn with some staggering rewards. One observer at West Wickham, for example, having clocked over 6,000 birds in 74¼ hours of watching in 1960 (c. 80 birds per hour), this year had his energy and dedication rewarded with 5,865 birds in 40½ hours of observation (c. 145 birds per hour). Some highlights of the Watch may be summarized in species order. A total of 6 Cormorants on three dates over London, 200 Curlew over Barnehurst on September 17th, 14 Greenshank south over Rye Meads on September 3rd, a total of 15 Stock Doves west over Primrose Hill on November 12th, the first confirmed evidence of migratory movement of this species through London, a vast flock of perhaps 5000 Wood Pigeons S.E. over Weybridge on November 9th, an increase from 3 to 11 Robins in Archbishop's Park, Lambeth overnight on October 18th/19th, Pied Flycatchers in moderate numbers up to September 31st and a total of 16 Bullfinches over Primrose Hill between October 21st and November 9th.

#### OCTOBER TO DECEMBER

During October, Bearded Tit records at Rye Meads S.F. included a flock of 17 on the 12th. At Swanscombe they reappeared on November 19th after a gap of nine months, up to 6 remaining until the end of the year. A Spoonbill at Rainham on October 5th was the first London record for this century and the three Shorelarks at Walton South Res. on the 28th constituted only the second. Stonechats, as a result of their successful season, were common in the Area with 10 at Perry Oaks S.F. on the 21st and there were up to 50 Little Grebes on the Brent Res.

However, the most dramatic presentation of diurnal migration on a vast scale was unfolded on Sunday, November 5th, a day that began with overcast skies. Huge numbers of Fieldfares were seen travelling west and south-west on a broad front and it is no exaggeration to suggest that the total for a thrilling day must have reached something like 90,000! In the same movement with the Fieldfares were smaller parties of Meadow Pipits, Skylarks and finches, though there were few Redwings. On this same day the Hedge Sparrow population at Rye Meads jumped spectacularly from 10 to 100.

While most of the interest over the week-end November 4th/5th was in the sky, a curious little wreck of Puffins took place, two exhausted birds were found, one at South Stifford and the other at Shirley and a third was seen on the Thames at Putney four days later. Over the same November week-end "about 10" Waxwings at Lower Kingswood were the first, and by far the largest, party of the year.

Two astonishing warbler records marked early December, when observers at Ruxley G.P., hardly able to believe the evidence of their eyes,



saw both a Whitethroat and a Lesser Whitethroat within a few yards of each other. Until Christmas the few records of note were appropriate to the period of calm before the storm; on the 17th, the first Hertfordshire record of an Eider at Hilfield Park Res. with two immature drakes at Brent Res. on the same day; the winter flock of Ruffs at Perry Oaks S.F. touching 30, Golden Plover in flocks of up to 450 at Shenleybury, 100 at Staines Moor and 350 at London Airport; a Glaucous Gull found dead at Girling Res. on Christmas Day and a Merlin very much alive in Regent's Park on the 27th and 155 Siskins in six areas of Surrey.

In the last three days of the year a dramatic change in the weather took place. The cold front moved south, driving before it a great concentration of birds. Twenty-two Whooper Swans came in to Girling Res. on December 28th. With snow imminent, Skylarks were moving south and south west in force and, on the last day of the year, the onset of heavy snow sent the numbers rocketing—over a thousand an hour was one estimate—and with the Skylarks came the Redwings in their thousands also, heading for the west.

#### RESEARCH PROJECTS

Members often ask what they can do to help apart from the recording of interesting species or common species in interesting situations and they may find the following studies and surveys of particular interest. Help will be welcomed with all of these up to and including 1963.

A study of Reed Buntings by J. Crudass has so far met with little response from members. This is a species whose movements are still puzzling and whose selection of breeding habitats appears to be widening. Some birds are being colour-ringed and watch should be kept for these, and information will be wanted during the breeding season. Details of this study can be obtained from J. Crudass, 4 Grange Grove, Canonbury, N.1. The Research Sub-Committee specially recommends this study.

Two surveys being organized by the British Trust for Ornithology are also specially recommended. These are the repeat survey of inland winter roosts of gulls and the Common Birds Breeding Census which the B.T.O. is undertaking on behalf of the Nature Conservancy. This latter study is of the utmost importance in connection with research into the effect of toxic chemicals on bird life and should be supported both by those whose chief interest is conservation and by those who are more interested in scientific studies. Information on both these studies may be obtained from R. C. Homes, 5 Shelveys Way, Tadworth, Surrey.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Records Committee wishes to thank all who have contributed to this Report and to welcome new members to the Society. The Editor gratefully acknowledges much help from the members of the Editorial Committee and the Records Committee, and especially Messrs. R. C. Homes, F. H. Jones, B. L. Sage and D. I. M. Wallace, who were responsible for the compilation of much of the systematic list, and the

Recorders. He also wishes to thank Mr. A. C. Parker for the loan of the photographs and the Recorders wish to thank Mr. J. G. Sanders for help in entering records.

Assistance in the exchange of records and information was given freely by the Editors of *British Birds*, C. Swaine (Hon. Secretary to the B.B. Rarity Records Committee), the officers of the British Trust for Ornithology, the Essex Bird Watching and Preservation Society, the Hertfordshire Natural History Society, the Kent Ornithological Society, the Surrey Bird Club, the Zoological Society of London and the Committee on Bird Sanctuaries in the Royal Parks. Members also have to acknowledge many kindnesses from the Metropolitan Water Board, the London County Council and the Croydon Corporation.

The cover drawing of a Caspian Tern was done by D. I. M. Wallace.

### ACCEPTED OR REJECTED?

All records of rare or "difficult" birds and of unusual occurrences of common species such as migrants seen "out of season" are scrutinized by the Records Committee before being accepted for publication in the *L.B.R.* On what grounds are they accepted or rejected?

It is obviously not a sound scientific method to accept a record *solely* on the strength of the observer's known ability or reputation since all records published in the Systematic List must stand the scrutiny not only of readers to-day but also of those who will refer to the *L.B.R.* in the future. All have the right to presume that records are based entirely on *correct identification supported by evidence*.

The work of the Records Committee can be reduced and with it the delay in publishing the Report if correspondence between observers and recorders can be cut to a minimum. Observers are asked, therefore, always to submit **the description taken in the field**, together with any relevant details of time, habitat, weather conditions and any other circumstances that may be helpful, of the species listed below.

All Divers	Bewick's Swan	Auks
Grebes, other than Great	All Buzzards	Collared Dove
Crested and Little	All Harriers	Marsh Tit
All Petrels	Rails and Crakes	Willow Tit
All Shearwaters	other than Water Rail	"unusual" Warblers
Shag	Wood Sandpiper	Firecrest
Hérons, other than common	Stints	Shrikes, other than
All Bitterns	Phalaropes	Red Backed
Scaup	All Skuas	Crossbills
Ferruginous Duck	Glaucous Gull	Cirl Bunting
Longtailed Duck	Iceland Gull	Lapland Bunting
All Geese	Little Gull	All "out of season"
Whooper Swan	"unusual" Terns	migrants

Finally, the Records Committee wish to thank all who already send in records and invite those who have not contributed to do so, thereby helping to make the *L.B.R.* a comprehensive account of the ornithology of London.

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| P. Meredith          | N. Robson             | Mrs. K. A. Wallace      |
| F. Metcalf           | R. L. Rolfe           | Mrs. M. Waller          |
| A. B. M. Mills       | J. Rowen              | Prof. E. H. Warmington  |
| B. S. Milne          |                       |                         |

*Continued on p. 59*

## Birds of the London Area, 1961

### A REPORT OF THE BIRD LIFE WITHIN TWENTY MILES OF ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

THIS report follows the British Ornithologists' Union's "Check-List of the Birds of Great Britain and Ireland" (1952) based on the Wetmore classification, and the numbers preceding each species refer to that List where the full scientific name will be found. The vernacular names are those adopted by the Editors of *British Birds* magazine as announced in January, 1953 (*B.B.*, 46: 1).

All records are for 1961 except where otherwise stated. The initials following each record refer to the observer(s) responsible for it, whose name(s) may be obtained by reference to the list of contributors on page 8.

The six counties within the circle of twenty miles radius are indicated by their initials, viz.:—B=Bucks; E=Essex; H=Herts; K=Kent; M=Middlesex; S=Surrey. Several of the Lea Valley reservoirs are partly in Middlesex, but all records referring to them are published under Essex, following the policy adopted by W. E. Glegg in his histories of the birds of Essex (1929) and Middlesex (1935). The following abbreviations are also used:—*B.B.*=*British Birds* magazine; *E.B.R.*=*Essex Bird Report*; *L.B.R.*=*London Bird Report*; G.P.=gravel pit; Res.=reservoir; S.F.=sewage farm; N., E., S., and W., are used for the cardinal points of the compass, but are intended only to indicate the general direction of flight; mo=many observers.

An open map of the London Area will be found useful for a full appreciation of many of the records. As the history of some of the species is intended to be continuous, reference to the Society's book *The Birds of the London Area since 1900* and to the systematic list of previous issues of the *L.B.R.* is recommended.

Records which have been published in the *Essex Bird Report*, 1961, are indicated by an asterisk which is placed by the particular record or, where all records of a species have been published, by the county initial "E".

#### 1 Black-throated Diver

E King George V Res., one on Feb. 18th (JF). Walthamstow Res.\*, one from Nov. 15th (BSMs) to Dec. 16th (JF).

#### 2 Great Northern Diver

M Queen Mary Res., one from Nov. 4th to Dec. 17th (JGC, SG, *et al.*).



- S Barn Elms Res., one present at the end of 1960 stayed until Jan. 7th, and there was a different bird from Jan. 18th to 28th (PRC, BAM, *et al.*).

#### 4 Red-throated Diver

- M Staines Res., one from Feb. 18th (KDE) to 20th (JAJ) and on Mar. 4th and 19th (mo).

#### 5 Great Crested Grebe

When the last national census was made in 1955 the count was of birds and not of breeding pairs, so that a direct comparison of breeding population is impossible. It is of interest, however, that while the only recent localities in the London part of Kent included in the report at that time were Ruxley and Sevenoaks with a total of four birds, in 1961 thirteen pairs were reported as follows: Chipstead Lake (1), Horton Kirby (3), Ruxley (2), South Darenth (3), Sutton-at-Hone (3) and a pit near Sundridge (1). Reports for other counties are unfortunately too incomplete for comparison, but breeding was attempted at Stoke Newington Res., Middx., for the first time in many years.

Comparison of numbers outside the breeding season is also difficult because of the volatile nature of the population. Thus at Queen Mary Res., Middx., the highest count in 1961 was of 635 on Aug. 6th (BAM), comparing closely with the 1960 maxima which were, however, in January and November. In November, 1961, there were 340 there on the 12th, falling to 90 on Dec. 17th and rising again after the onset of the cold spell to about 350 on the 30th. Compared with 1959 and 1960, the two peak years, numbers in the Area as a whole outside the breeding season were probably higher on Wildfowl Count dates in September but rather lower in November. On September 17th the total was 714 excluding King George V (Essex) and Queen Mary reservoirs, at the last of which there had been 635 a month before. At Staines Res., Middx., there was a count of 163 on Dec. 16th but 400 on the 17th, which would give food for thought on the need for simultaneous counting at the different reservoirs, and on variability in counting conditions and the skill of observers if it were not that there was other evidence of a big influx of waterfowl into the London Area at that time.

#### 6 Red-necked Grebe

- K Sundridge, one on Nov. 15th-16th (JGH, JMH).  
 M Queen Mary Res., one from Jan. 11th (MC), to 22nd (mo). Staines Res., one from Nov. 12th to 27th (PEB *et al.*). Inner London: Hyde Park, one from Feb. 22nd to 28th (CHH, CHFP).

#### 7 Slavonian Grebe

- H Rye Meads, one on Dec. 17th (TWG).  
 M Kempton Park Res., one on Nov. 25th and Dec. 27th (AJC). King George VI Res., one on Jan. 8th (LAB, BEC). Staines Res., two on

Nov. 25th and 27th (BEC, DGH, DMP) and one on Dec. 10th (JFC, JRH, CMV) and 23rd (DGH, DMP).

- S Barn Elms Res., one which was first seen on Dec. 26th, 1960, stayed until Jan. 10th (mo).

### 8 Black-necked Grebe

- E\* Girling Res., one from Sept. 9th, two from Oct. 14th to Dec. 29th, with a third present from Dec. 17th (JCE, JF, BSMs). \*King George V Res., one on Sept. 12th and Dec. 28th (FJL). \*Valentine's Park, one from Oct. 3rd-8th (JM).
- H Rye Meads, one on Sept. 8th (TWG).
- M Kempton Park Res., one on Nov. 25th (AJC) and Dec. 10th (EJC, WRI). King George VI Res., one on Mar. 23rd and 26th (mo), eight on Sept. 16th (KDE), 13 on the 24th (SG), 10 still present on Oct. 8th (JDM), up to eight for the next two weeks and one on Dec. 9th. Queen Mary Res., one on July 22nd (BEC, AQ), Oct. 22nd (LAB) and Dec. 30th (JMC). Staines Res., one on Sept. 23rd (JHB, JGC) and Oct. 29th (JRH).

### 9 Little Grebe

Larger flocks than usual recorded.' Spring maximum, 38 at Rye Meads S.F., Herts. on Mar. 25th. In autumn and early winter 69 at the same locality on Sept. 30th and 65 on Dec. 4th (RMRG); c. 52 at Ruxley G.P., Kent, on Dec. 26th and c. 40 at Stone Ponds, Kent, on Sept. 27th (RWC, JCK): Brent Res., Middx., maximum 50 plus on Oct. 21st (LAB, MDK).

Interesting breeding records included three nests at Rainham, Essex (BK): two pairs nesting among boxes and pots in shallow water in a rubbish dump near Aldenham, Herts. (EHW): 13 pairs nesting at Rye Meads, Herts. (RMRG): three pairs at Chevening Park, Kent (*KOS Bulletin*): three pairs at Ruxley G.P., Kent (FJH) and three pairs at Brent Res., Middx. (EHW). It would be useful to have all breeding records for comparison of the spring and autumn populations.

In Inner London, there was an influx of up to three to the Round Pond, Kensington Gardens, between July 5th and Aug. 29th, with one on Sept. 19th (CHH, CHFP, RFS). Single birds were seen in Regent's Park on Feb. 15th and Nov. 26th (DIMW).

### 14 Storm Petrel

- M Staines Res., one on Nov. 18th was seen well and fully described (JF, DMP, CMV).

### 27 Gannet

- E King George V Res., an adult released by the P.D.S.A. was present from Mar. 18th to 25th but died later (JCE, JF, FJL).

**28 Cormorant**

M/S Numerous as usual in winter, with a maximum of 70 at Queen Mary Res., Middx., on Feb. 5th (SG, JRP) and 12 present on July 26th (ES); two with the characteristics of the Southern form (*Carbo c. sinensis*) on Feb. 4th (CMV). The most reported at Walton Res., Surrey, were 53 on Feb. 4th (SG). Inner London, one flying S.W. over Westminster on Sept. 5th, four flying W. between Lambeth and Westminster on Oct. 4th (GHG) and one flying W.N.W. over Primrose Hill on Mar. 16th (DIMV).

**29 Shag**

E Nazeing G.P., one first seen on Dec. 27th, 1960, remained until Jan. 7th (BSMs). Walthamstow Res., an immature from Jan. 21st to 28th (JF), two from Apr. 8th to 9th (JF, BSMs) and two from May 3rd to 14th (JF).

H Rye Meads, one on Jan. 5th (BSMs).

M Brent Res., two on May 18th (WJW), three on Dec. 22nd (LAB) and one on 27th (EHW). King George VI Res., one on Aug. 19th and 28th, and Sept. 10th and 16th (mo). Queen Mary Res., two immatures on Apr. 15th (CMV) and one immature on Sept. 24th (BPP). Staines Res., one on Nov. 18th (DGH, DMP).

**30 Heron**

E Little Parndon, four nests (FHJ). Walthamstow Res., 55 nests (AG). Rainham, 58 birds on July 22nd (RT).

H Watford, no evidence of breeding this year.

K Chevening Park, a pair raised three young (*KOS Bulletin*).

M Kempton Park, 95 nests (EMG). Inner London: one roosted in early months of the year on island in Regent's Park (EHW). Bloomsbury, one perched on the roof of the third floor of the Senate House on Dec. 8th (EHW).

S Gatton Park, 18 nests (HB). Richmond Park, no breeding attempted (EDB).

**42 Spoonbill**

E Rainham Marsh, one on Oct. 5th (JHB), the first record for the Area this century.

**DUCKS**

A summary is again included under the principal species of the results of the wildfowl counts in the winter of 1961-62. Comparison should be made with the review of the first ten years of the counts in *L.B.R.*, 22: 36-49 and the summaries in 24: 14-21 and 25: 13-20.

**Mandarin**

S In response to a request for all records of this species the following have been received from Surrey: at Addlestone, a duck and three

ducklings at New Lines Pond on June 18th (GHG), at Ewell Court, a drake on Oct. 9th and five on the 12th (KDE), at Fetcham Downs, two flying N.W. on Apr. 24th and one flying in the same direction at Fetcham Pond on the 26th, at Mickleham, four believed to be juveniles in flight on June 3rd (TB), on R. Mole, a duck and four ducklings at Burhill on June 10th, at Silvermere, a pair on Feb. 12th, at Walton-on-Thames, three on Warren Pond on Oct. 14th, at Weybridge, four flying west on Dec. 16th and six on frozen back-water of R. Wey on the 26th (GHG), at Wimbledon Park Lake, a drake seen on a number of occasions since Feb. 20th, 1954 (GC) and on the Common a drake on a pond from Apr. 11th to 13th (JE).

#### 45 Mallard

**In the winter of 1960-61 it seemed that the rising trend of numbers had at last halted, but the only really representative series of counts on the wildfowl count dates were in December and January. The winter of 1961-62, however, again compared well with the last winter for which an average of three counts could be calculated. For ease of comparison the averages are given below for all winters with at least three acceptable counts:—**

1952-53	1953-54	1954-55	1955-56	1956-57	1958-59	1961-62
3,444	4,107	4,650	5,012	5,438	5,674	5,750

**The counts taken in the middle of the months Nov.-Jan., 1961-62 were 5,396, 6,036 and 5,819, with a less complete coverage in February suggesting a drop of only 2 per cent. Numbers at Hilfield Park Res., not included in the above analysis, were also substantially higher than usual. No figures are available for the cold weather at the turn of the year when there was a big influx of some other species.**

- H A duckling ringed at St. Albans on May 22nd was recovered in Yorkshire, 190 miles N.N.W. on Nov. 4th.
- M Early nesting was reported from St. James's Park where there were two eggs on Feb. 10th (ABMM) and young on Apr. 1st (sc), and from Brentford where there was a brood of 13 on Apr. 6th (CAW).

#### 46 Teal

**In several recent years the number of teal on count dates has been low compared with the winters of 1954-55 to 1956-57. In the winter now considered there was a big improvement, and the average of four monthly counts was 856, compared with a previous highest average of 845 in 1956-57. The largest count, amounting to 1,304 in January, 1962, was also the highest since the counts began. Both these figures should, however, be treated with some reserve, as in January, 181 Teal were recorded at Barn Elms and the same number on the Thames between Putney and Barnes. While these could have been different birds the coincidence is surprising**

**and if one of the counts is excluded, the winter average drops to 811 and the largest count to 1,123, which still leaves the winter population at near the level of the two previous peak years.**

There seems to have been a pronounced influx in November, with numbers rising from 164 at King George VI Res. on Nov. 12th to about 400 on the 18th. In mid-December there were 450 there with other large flocks at Island Barn Res. (233), Walton South Res. (c. 100) and Hilfield Park Res. (182). Towards the end of the month parties of 30-80 were seen at a number of other localities including Beddington, Hershams, Perry Oaks and Romford sewage farms and over the Thames at Swanscombe.

A juvenile duck ringed at Abberton, Essex, on Oct. 2nd, 1959, was recovered near Godstone, Surrey, on Jan. 14th, and a full-grown drake ringed at the same place on Sept. 19th, 1953, was recovered at Swanscombe, Kent, on Jan. 10th, 1959.

The only June records were of \*one or two birds at Rainham and at Walthamstow Reservoirs.

- H Hilfield Park Res., a drake American Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) on Nov. 11th (BLS) and 15th (EHW) was fully described and appeared to be a wild bird.

#### 47 Garganey

On spring migration, the first were a pair at Island Barn Res., Surrey, on Mar. 4th (DP), followed by \*three at Rainham, Essex, on the 26th (JHB), a pair Old Parkbury G.P., Herts., on the 28th (EHW), a pair at Danson Park, Kent, on Apr. 2nd and a drake at South Norwood, Surrey, on the 7th (IRB).

The most interesting records in the breeding season were of \*one or two at Rainham in June, followed by 16 on Aug. 3rd (JHB), and \*a drake at Nazeing, Essex, on May 21st (BSMs).

As usual records from July onwards were more numerous: Walthamstow Res., \*a duck in July and Aug. (JF); Rye Meads, a drake in July and on Aug. 12th (RMRG); Brent Res., one from Aug. 2nd to 11th (LAB, MDK) but five on the 7th (DT); Perry Oaks S.F., one on July 15th (JBC); Queen Mary Res., a pair on July 10th (JEC); Barn Elms, a very tame drake from Sept. to Nov. was almost certainly an escape; Morden Hall Park, one Aug. 9th to 10th (MJcd).

King George VI Res., one on Oct. 28th (CMV).

#### 49 Gadwall

- E Walthamstow Res., a duck on Jan. 3rd (RWG) and \*one to three between June 18th and July 22nd (JF).

- H Aldenham Res., two on Nov. 15th (EHW, LKW). Hilfield Park Res., a pair on Oct. 8th and 21st (BLS, EHW).

- M Brent Res., one or two seen frequently between Apr. 30th and Aug. 27th, then up to 13 between Sept. 2nd and 12th (LAB, RHK, MDK, wjw). Feltham G.Ps., a drake on Apr. 3rd (JBC). King George VI



and Staines Res., a drake on Jan. 14th (DGH, DMP, CMV) and May 11th (JBC), a pair on June 4th (DMP) and a drake on Dec. 17th (MJC). Queen Mary Res., one or two Jan.-May and Sept.-Dec. (mo) but two pairs on Mar. 11th (AJC). Inner London: Regent's Park, a duck flying N. on Aug. 5th (DIMV).

- S Barn Elms Res. and R. Thames at Hammersmith, maximum in early part of year was 18 in Jan. and at the end of the year 25 on Nov. 25th. Up to four drakes and three ducks in breeding season but no evidence of breeding.

## 50 Wigeon

**In the two winters of 1958-59 and 1959-60 numbers had been very low, but there had been a recovery in 1960-61 though not until Feb. In 1961-62 numbers started rising earlier and by Feb. were very similar to the previous year with a total of 572 compared with 540. The February figures are close to the best since the counts started but the winter average is still below the peak.**

- E\* Rainham, 17 on Mar. 26th and about 30 on Dec. 12th (JHB).  
 H Hilfield Park Res., maxima 60 in Jan. and Feb. and 118 on Dec. 23rd, not included in the summary (BLS).  
 M Out of the total of 540 on Feb. 12th, 1961, there were about 350 at Staines Res. and 125 at King George VI Res. The possibility of some duplication cannot be excluded.

## 52 Pintail

- E\* Fishers Green G.P., three on Dec. 27th (JCE). Nazeing G.P., one on Jan. 7th (BSMs) and three on the 31st (JAB). Rainham, four pairs on Mar. 26th (JHB) and one or two in Dec. (JHB, REFP).  
 H Dobbs Weir G.P., three on Jan. 21st and one or two up to Feb. 11th (NR). Hilfield Park Res., a duck on Mar. 4th (LAB), two or three on various dates from October to December but eight on Nov. 29th (WJB), six on Dec. 9th and four on 17th (BLS).  
 K Swanscombe, a duck in flight on Nov. 19th (MJC, KDE, JGS).  
 M Brent Res., a duck found dead on May 24th (DT), one on Nov. 17th (RFP) and Dec. 17th (LAB). Queen Mary Res., one on Feb. 26th and Oct. 18th (GCG) and 28th (BEC, AQ). Staines Res., one on Jan. 29th (AQ), Oct. 18th (MC) and Dec. 23rd to 26th (mo).  
 S Barn Elms, a pair on Feb. 19th (MDK, AGV).

## 53 Shoveler

**There is a large element of chance in the results of the monthly counts of this species on account of the small numbers involved. In this last winter, 1961-62, there were more than usual in November and March, 106 in each case, but rather less in mid-winter.**

- E Rainham, four drakes on June 4th (PJS), up to eight birds during this month and a seasonal maximum of 16 on Aug. 1st\* (JHB); 18 on Dec. 23rd (REFP).\*

- H Rye Meads, one pair bred (RMRG). Cheshunt G.P., three on May 28th (BSMS).
- K Ruxley G.P., a pair on May 23rd. Sundridge, three adults on July 18th (*KOS Bulletin*).
- M In the early part of the year the largest numbers were 110 at King George VI Res. on Jan. 15th (sg) and about 50 on Queen Mary Res. on Feb. 5th (PRC) and Mar. 5th (sg). In October they were unusually numerous at this last locality where there were 140 on the 22nd (JRP). King George VI Res., three on June 25th (JBC).
- S Island Barn Res., 110 on Sept. 17th, the largest count ever made at this site (DP).

#### 54 Red-crested Pochard

- E Nazeing G.P., two ducks on Apr. 16th, one on May 21st (JCE).
- H Rye Meads, two ducks from Mar. 30th to Apr. 6th and one on Apr. 23rd and May 12th (RMRG). Hilfield Park Res., one on Oct. 21st (LAB, MDK, BLS, EHW) and a different bird from Nov. 11th to 18th (BLS).

See the note in *L.B.R.*, 25: 16 for comments on records of this species. Other records which obviously refer to escapes have not been included.

#### 55 Scaup

- E\* There was a duck at Nazeing G.P. from Jan. 1st to Feb. 10th (BSMS), at King George V Res. on Feb. 4th (RFP) and at Girling Res. on the 11th (JF). Walthamstow Res., a pair on Mar. 11th (RWG), a duck on the 11th (RFS) and 25th (RFP) and two ducks from Apr. 1st to 22nd (JF, RWG).
- H Rye Meads, four drakes on Feb. 23rd, two from the 25th to Mar. 15th with one duck on Mar. 11th (RMRG).
- M Brent Res., a duck on Feb. 11th (LAB, WJW) and a drake on the 26th and on Apr. 20th (EHW); a duck from Dec. 17th to 23rd (LAB, DT, EHW). King George VI and Staines Res., one to two from Jan. 2nd to Mar. 19th and again on various dates from Oct. 22nd to Dec. 17th (mo). Queen Mary Res., a duck on Oct. 22nd and 28th (LAB, AJC). Stoke Newington Res., a duck on Feb. 9th (JF). Wood Green Res., two ducks on Aug. 18th (FJL).
- S Barn Elms Res., the two drakes present at the end of 1960 were seen until Feb. 11th, and then one to Apr. 8th; a drake found dead on Apr. 23rd, and a drake from Nov. 25th to the end of the year (mo). Lonsdale Road Res., one to two drakes on five dates until Feb. 26th were probably the same birds as at Barn Elms; a drake on Dec. 22nd, two on the 25th and three on the 26th. Molesey Res., an immature drake from Jan. 7th to Mar. 12th, and a second bird on Jan. 28th; a drake on Nov. 22nd and two on Dec. 27th (mo). Richmond Park, a drake on Mar. 6th (BAM). Wimbledon Park Lake, two drakes on Mar. 24th (IRB).

## 56 Tufted Duck

**The numbers of Tufted Duck appear to have declined very considerably in the winter of 1960-61 though there were no complete counts in December and January. In 1961-62 the average for Nov.-Jan. was 2,977, a great improvement and substantially above the period 1950-51 to 1953-54 but lower than in any of the winters 1954-55 to 1959-60.**

- E Ilford, a brood on July 16th (WGT). Nazeing G.P., three pairs bred (BSMs). Rainham,\* 15 drakes on June 14th (JHB, PJS). Walthamstow Res.,\* six pairs bred (JF, RWG). Wanstead Basin,\* 127 on Dec. 17th (DWA).
- H Cheshunt G.P., one pair bred (BSMs). Maple Cross, 7 to 8 pairs bred rearing over 40 young (BPP). Rye Meads, eight pairs bred (RMRG). Stockers Lake, two pairs on June 10th (BPP).
- K Chevening, a pair with five young in July (*KOS Bulletin*). Darenth G.P., three pairs on May 7th (WIB). Greenwich Park, one pair of wild birds probably bred (PCT). Ruxley G.P., five pairs on July 9th (Jcl, RWC). Sundridge, two pairs on Apr. 22nd (HFG). Sutton-at-Hone G.P., three pairs on May 20th (FJH).
- M Brent Res., no evidence of breeding (LAB). Chiswick House, a pair with two young in July (MW). Clissold Park, three pairs bred (JHB). Gunnersbury Park, two pairs bred (PMS). Stain Hill Res., two pairs bred (EJC). Inner London: Hyde Park, six pairs bred, hatching about 33 young of which 19 fledged (RFS). Regent's Park, 12 broods hatched and 15 young fledged (DIMW). Lambeth, 15 drakes on the Thames on Mar. 9th (GHG). Battersea Park, six pairs but none bred successfully (JNR).
- S Barn Elms, maxima were about 1,000 on Feb. 4th (GCC) and 1,000 plus on Dec. 30th (PJSn) after 450 on the 17th and 6-700 on the 25th, one pair bred (BAM, AGV). Gatton Park, one pair bred (DMB, HB). Molesey Res., peak in the autumn build-up was 660 on Sept. 3rd (PJO); five nests some of which were undoubtedly repeat clutches (EJC, WRI). Richmond Park, three juveniles on Aug. 7th (VFH).

## 57 Pochard

**In 1961-62 there was no great change in the numbers compared with the previous winter until the January count when there were 1,598. This followed, as with the Tufted Duck, a marked influx during the cold spell at the end of December. By comparison with the winters of 1955-56 and 1956-57 in particular numbers have been rather low in the early part of the last three winters but in two of them have been up to or over average in January.**

- B Colnbrook G.P., two adults on July 1st (REFF).
- E Rainham, up to 17 in June; 175 on Dec. 12th and 123 on the 23rd are very unusual for the Essex side of the Thames marshes (JHB).

- Romford S.F., 14 on Oct. 29th and 40 plus on Nov. 19th (RRS).  
 Wanstead Basin, eight ducks on Dec. 21st (DWA).
- H Hilfield Park Res., from about 100 on July 20th (FJL) numbers built up to 369 on Sept. 16th (BLS). Rye Meads, five drakes on June 22nd (RMRG). Troy Mill, 250 on Dec. 26th (JSD).
- K Sundridge, three pairs on July 18th (*KOS Bulletin*). Ruxley G.P., c. 40 on Dec. 25th. Stone, 57 on Dec. 28th (JCI, RWC).
- M Brent Res., a pair in May and June (LAB). Staines Res., a pair on Apr. 26th (MC). Stoke Newington Res., 22 on Dec. 30th (DIMW). Inner London: Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, two broods; 40 on Dec. 27th and 51 on 28th (RFS). Regent's Park, 9 broods hatched and 26 young fledged (DIMW). Battersea Park, one pair present, but no young seen (JNR).
- S Barn Elms Res., maximum in early part of year 302 on Jan. 15th. In December numbers rose from 316 on the 17th to about 800 on the 25th (CAW). Gatton Park, five shot on Dec. 23rd (CMM). Redhill G.P., five on Dec. 22nd rising to 30 on the 27th (RLR, DW). Weybridge, 23 flying west on Dec. 23rd (GHG).

### 58 Ferruginous Duck

- H Hilfield Park Res., a duck on Nov. 26th (EHW).
- M Regent's Park, a pinioned pair bred, but a full-winged drake on Jan. 29th and a duck on Dec. 10th were considered by observer to have been different birds from young reared in previous years (DIMW).

### *Aythya* hybrids

- S Barn Elms Res., a drake on Jan. 28th (BEC, JFC) and from Dec. 25th to 27th (CAW) resembled a bird seen in previous years. It is interesting that the date of the last bird's appearance synchronizes with a big influx of diving ducks during the cold spell. Several other hybrids frequent Inner London (DIMW).

### 60 Goldeneye

**The winter of 1961-62 provided the highest monthly count yet with a total of 70 on Jan. 14th.**

- E Nazeing G.P., up to three until the first week of March and up to four in Nov.-Dec.\* (BSMs). Rainham, two on Dec. 12th\* (JHB). Lea valley reservoirs: maxima of 23 on Girling and King George V Res. on Jan. 21st\* (JF) and 18 on Feb. 26th (JCE); last seen were two on Apr. 8th at Walthamstow Res. (JF, RWG); seen on Sept. 14th\* (BSMs) and from Oct. 27th to the end of the year with a maximum of 26 on Dec. 26th\* (BSMs).
- H Hilfield Park Res., up to six in early months (BLS). Rye Meads, one on Mar. 11th and up to five from Oct. 21st to end of year (RMRG). Stockers Lake, one on Jan. 19th (LLE).
- K Stone Pond, two on Jan. 28th (*KOS Bulletin*) and one on Feb. 12th (FJH). Sundridge, one on Nov. 18th (*op. cit.*). Swanscombe, three on Dec. 3rd (JMC, MJC, KDE).

- M Brent Res., up to three until Mar. 23rd (LAB) and one to two from Oct. 21st; five on Dec. 26th (EHW). Harefield Moor G.P., one on Nov. 4th (BPP). Kempton Park Res., two on Nov. 25th and three on Dec. 16th (AJC). King George VI and Staines Res., present up to Apr. 23rd, maximum 40 on Mar. 8th (MC); 13 on Nov. 12th (JRH). Queen Mary Res., on various dates up to Apr. 15th, maximum *c.* 20 on Feb. 14th (BEC), and from Oct. 22nd, maximum 23 on Dec. 30th (JMC). Stoke Newington Res., a duck from Jan. 25th to Feb. 13th (JEC, JHB, JF). Inner London: Regent's Park, one on Dec. 16th (RG, DIMW).
- S Barn Elms Res., one on Jan. 15th (JGg) and Nov. 15th (RWG). Island Barn Res., one on Jan. 22nd (DP). Molesey Res., up to six until Feb. 6th (WRI *et al.*) and one to three from Nov. 18th (AJC, SG, WRI).

### 61 Long-tailed Duck

- H Stockers Lake, an immature on Dec. 10th (BPP) and 12th (IGJ).  
 K Sundridge, an adult duck found dead on Nov. 21st (JGH, JMH).  
 M King George VI Res., the bird seen at the end of 1960 stayed until Jan. 15th (mo). Staines Res., one on Dec. 31st (MG).

### 64 Common Scoter

- E Lea valley reservoirs, a duck on Feb. 4th on King George V Res. (REFP) and a drake on Mar. 11th on Walthamstow Res.\* (JF): a duck on several of the waters on Oct. 21st to 22nd\* (JCE, JF) and a pair on Nov. 19th on Walthamstow Res. (JF). Wanstead Basin,\* a moribund drake on Dec. 23rd (JAS).
- H Rye Meads, a duck from Nov. 18th to 23rd (RMRG).
- M King George VI Res., a duck on Apr. 14th (LAB) and five ducks on Nov. 18th (JF). Queen Mary Res., a duck from Apr. 12th to 16th (JG *et al.*).
- S Barn Elms Res., a drake on Feb. 25th (AJC, SK).

### 67 Eider

- H Hilfield Park Res., a duck on Dec. 17th (BLS, EHW *et al.*) is the first record for Hertfordshire.
- M Brent Res., two immature drakes from Dec. 17th to 27th (LAB, DT, EHW *et al.*).

### 69 Red-breasted Merganser

- M Brent Res., a drake on Dec. 27th (EHW). Kempton Park Res., a duck on Feb. 18th (AJC). Queen Mary Res., two on Jan. 7th (AJC, LAB) and one on 15th (BEC), a drake on Apr. 12th (JG) and one on Dec. 2nd (BEC, SG). Staines Res., from one to three on six dates up to Feb. 18th, one from Nov. 17th to Dec. 2nd, two on the 10th, four on the 23rd and two on the 27th (mo).



70 **Goosander**

**There was a further marked drop in numbers in the winter of 1961-62, the average for the Jan.-Mar. counts being 155 compared with 200 for the same period in 1960-61.**

- E Lea valley reservoirs, maxima in first three months were ten at King George V Res. on Jan. 14th (JF) and 17 on Feb. 12th\* (JCE). Up to six on Walthamstow Res. where an injured duck stayed throughout the year\* (JF, RFS). Nazeing G.P., from one to three on several dates in Jan. and Feb.\* (BSMS). Girling Res., four on Dec. 26th\* (JCE).
- H Hilfield Park Res., one on Dec. 23rd (BLS). Hoddesdon, one on Feb. 4th stayed until the spring (NR). Rye Meads, one on Mar. 5th and Dec. 16th (RMRG). Troy Mill, three on Dec. 26th (JSD).
- K Sundridge, two on Jan. 29th (*KOS Bulletin*).
- M Brent Res., two on Jan. 25th (LAB) and one occasionally from Nov. 25th to Dec. 23rd (LAB, AGV). Kempton Park Res., 19 on Jan. 28th, eight on Feb. 18th, three on Mar. 11th, two on Dec. 16th and three on the 27th (AJC). King George VI Res., 10 on Jan. 22nd (JRH) and two on Nov. 11th (SG). Queen Mary Res., up to c. 60 in the early part of the year (PRC), last seen on Apr. 23rd (JRP), three on Nov. 19th (SG), c. 30 on Dec. 24th (BEC) and 75 on the 30th (JMC). Staines Res., 58 on Feb. 12th (CMV, SG) and c. 60 on the 26th (PRC), last seen 11 on Apr. 8th (CMV); five on Nov. 18th (JRH) rising to 62 on Dec. 16th (DGH). Inner London: a duck in St. James's Park from Feb. 26th to Mar. 5th (ABMM).
- S Barn Elms Res., maximum in first three months was 25 on Jan. 15th (LAB, PJSn, AGV), last seen Apr. 8th; up to five at the end of the year (mo). Gatton Park, one on Feb. 5th (RLR). Island Barn Res., the peak in Feb. and Mar. was 25 (DP). Molesey Res., maximum 130 on Feb. 4th (SG) and 65 on Dec. 30th (PBL). Up to four seen on or over several parts of the Thames during the year. R. Mole, 13 near Molesey on Mar. 11th (WRI).

71 **Smew**

**Once again the number of Smew was extremely low compared with the years preceding the last war and the winters up to 1955-56. Whereas the largest winter totals for the waters included in the monthly wildfowl counts used to range from one to nearly two hundred, in the last four winters the highest count has been one of about 70.**

- E Fishers Green G.P., two on Jan. 29th (JCE). Lea valley res., maximum 16 on Feb. 4th (REFP) and 18th (JF), nine on Dec. 30th (JF). Snaresbrook, two on Eagle Pond, Jan. 6th (RB).
- H Aldenham Res., two on Jan. 4th (LAB). Hilfield Park Res., two from Jan. 8th to Mar. 11th (BLS) but five on Feb. 11th (RWG), two on Dec. 9th and 17th and five on the 23rd to 24th (BLS, EHW).
- M Brent Res., maximum 32 on Jan. 29th and Feb. 8th, one on Dec. 3rd and ten on the 17th (LAB). Gunnersbury Park, one on Jan. 28th (PMS). Highgate Ponds, three drakes on Jan. 24th (REFP) and

one on Feb. 8th and Mar. 4th (BHH). Kempton Park Res., three on Dec. 27th (AJC). King George VI Res., one on Dec. 24th (SG). Staines Res., maximum 18 on Feb. 19th (JRP), and seen from Nov. 25th (DMP), four on the 24th, *c.* 20 on the 26th and 28 on the 27th (AJC, JRH, LAB *et al.*). Stoke Newington Res., maximum 12 on Feb. 12th (JHB, JGC, DIMW) and Dec. 20th (JHB). Wood Green Res., nine on Jan. 23rd and eight on the 30th, and 13 on Dec. 27th (FJL). Inner London: Buckingham Palace Gardens, five on Feb. 13th (AM) were said to have been present about three weeks. St. James's Park, two on Feb. 26th (AM). Regent's Park, a drake on Jan. 28th and 29th (DIMW).

- S Barn Elms Res., maximum *c.* 25 on Jan. 19th (AQ); in December up to three until the 16th, 14 on the 17th (PJSn) and 23 on the 30th (GCG). Also seen at Lonsdale Road and Molesey Res. in Jan. and Dec., the first dates in the latter month being the 22nd and 24th respectively.

### 73 Shelduck

- E Rainham, 15 on Mar. 26th, up to eight in June\* and 18 on Aug. 31st (JHB). King George V Res.,\* 9 on May 5th and one on the 30th (JCE).
- H Hilfield Park Res., two on Dec. 23rd to 24th (BLS, EHW).
- K Swanscombe Marshes, one pair with seven very small young on June 3rd (DJM). Maximum number at other times was nine except during hard weather on Dec. 30th when there were 71, by far the largest number ever recorded in the Area (DJM).
- M Thirteen dated records of up to two birds until the end of April, when there was a pair at Brent Res. on the 26th (LAB, MDK) and at Staines Res. on the 29th (CMV), but 14 adults at King George VI Res. on Jan. 15th (BEC, SG, JRP, CMV). Only one autumn record, of two immatures at Brent Res. on Aug. 8th (LAB). Three December records, two coinciding with hard weather—Brent, four on the 23rd (LAB) and Staines, five on the 24th (JRC, SG).
- S From a number of records of a single duck at Barn Elms, Richmond Park, on the Thames at Hammersmith and at Dulwich Park Pond it seems probable that there was at least one escaped bird at large: from Nov. 8th to 27th, however, there were two at Barn Elms.

### Geese *sp.*

- E Girling Res., seven flying in a southerly direction on Feb. 7th were possibly Grey Lags (RFP).
- M Acton, 15 on Oct. 23rd (PRC). Brent Res., two on Jan. 15th (LAB, DT, AGV) and eight on Mar. 17th (DT).

### 75 Grey Lag-Goose

- H Hilfield Park Res., one on Nov. 4th and 18th and Dec. 16th was considered to be undoubtedly an escape.

**76 White-fronted Goose**

- E/H Rye Meads, 12 arrived from the west on Jan. 18th and departed eastwards after circling the marsh, crossing into Essex\* (TWG).  
 M Staines Res., one circling high on Jan. 7th (DMP).  
 S Epsom, two skeins totalling 67 definite white-fronts flew N.E. on Feb. 6th and were followed soon after by another 34 geese too far off to identify specifically (KDE). Weybridge, 11 flew S.W. in the early-morning of Dec. 25th (GHG).

**80 Brent Goose**

- E Girling Res., one on Oct. 1st was later found dead (JF).  
 H Rye Meads, an adult on Sept. 21st (LLE). It seems probable that these two records refer to the same bird which may well have been an escape from one of the many collections now in the country.

**81 Barnacle Goose**

- B Wraysbury G.P., one on Mar. 28th seen with five Canada Geese was almost certainly an escape (MG).  
 M Brent Res., one on June 10th, probably an escape (LAB, AGV).

**82 Canada Goose**

- B Sunnymeads, two families with seven young each at King's Mead G.P. on July 15th (DGH, DMP). Wraysbury G.P., five on Mar. 28th (MG).  
 E Girling Res., three on May 21st (BSMs). Valentine's Park, a pinioned pair bred (KB). Walthamstow Res., two on Aug. 27th (JF).  
 K Horton Kirby G.P., two on Apr. 29th (FJH).  
 M Gunnersbury Park, one on Nov. 7th (PMS). Ruislip/Northwood, 12 plus on June 8th (WGT). Stoke Newington Res., nine on Apr. 17th (Mr. Davison per JGC). West Drayton, two on Apr. 30th and local reports of four seen regularly (IGJ).  
 S Addlestone, three flew over Woburn Park on Mar. 15th (PVG). Fetcham Pond, ten in early morning on Apr. 9th (AD). Richmond Park, three on Apr. 29th (MJW). Sunbury Lock, six on backwater on Dec. 28th (GHG). Weybridge, seen frequently at New Haw (LH). One on the Thames was probably the same bird as seen in 1960 and of dubious origin.

**84 Mute Swan**

The following figures for the waters included in the monthly wildfowl counts are given for comparison with those in *L.B.R.*, 25: 22:—

	<i>Sept. 17</i>	<i>Nov. 12</i>	<i>Dec. 17</i>	<i>Jan. 14</i>	<i>Feb. 18</i>	<i>Mar. 18</i>
1961-62 -	227	294	281	260	186	236

It will be noted that there is a definite tendency to a decline in numbers.

- E Rainham Marsh, a locality from which figures not previously given—48 on Dec. 12th was said to be about normal (JHB).
- M Inner London: a pair began to nest on an island in Regent's Park but failed. Up to five seen occasionally in Inner London Parks.
- An analysis of 29 records of Mute Swans ringed and/or recovered in the Area in 1961 shows 13 with movements restricted to one or two miles and a tendency for some others to move up and down the Thames, *e.g.* from Mortlake in April to Chertsey in October and in the opposite direction from Hammersmith in September to the Surrey Docks in December. A juvenile from Godstone moved 17 miles N.E. to Crayford between September and December.
- A little light is thrown on the winter influx to the Thames by records there in later years in Aug.-Oct. of birds ringed at St. Albans in January, at Cambridge in February and at Hemel Hempstead in October, all ringed as juveniles or birds not fully mature. Two adults ringed at Abberton in August 1958, were recovered at Kingston, 55 miles S.W. in April and December two to three years later.

### **Cygnus sp.**

- M Queen Mary Res., a party of 52 wild swans appeared from the S.E. at 1510 hrs. on Nov. 5th and continued N.W. at about 200 feet overhead. They were calling "hoo-hoo" intermittently and a large yellow area was visible on the beaks (JGL). They were considered by the observer to be Whooper Swans. Outside the Area, a few miles west of Maidenhead, a chevron of 66 wild swans, not specifically identified, arrived from the east at 1550 hrs. and continued W.N.W. At dusk, some 20 to 30 minutes later, a flight of 62 was sighted by a party of the Oxford Orn. Soc. near Dorchester, Oxon. Earlier in the afternoon the same observers had seen a small flock of Bewick's Swans moving west near Dorchester.
- S Weybridge, seven wild swans flew over very high towards the west at 0930 hrs. on Nov. 5th (GHG). It was a day of vast immigration from the Continent. Barn Elms Res., two, thought by the observer to be Whooper Swans, flew west on Dec. 25th (CAWF).

### **85 Whooper Swan**

- E Girling Res., an adult and an immature on Jan. 16th (JCE). King George VI Res., 22 flew in from the north-east at 1515 hrs. on Dec. 28th. The characteristic bill pattern was seen well with the birds at rest and trumpeting was heard (FJL).

### **86 Bewick's Swan**

- E/H\* Girling Res., 18 on Dec. 26th\* (JCE) flew off N.E. and were seen at Rye Meads on the same day by JC.
- S Barn Elms Res., three adults and eight immature on Jan. 18th (BAM).

**91 Buzzard**

- K Farningham Woods, one on Oct. 3rd soaring at no great height and being mobbed by a Kestrel (RWC). At Barnehurst, 5 miles N.N.E. of Farningham Woods, probably the same bird seen circling and drifting W. on the same date (WIB).

**93 Sparrow Hawk**

All records are again given in full this year as the trend towards scarcity, previously noted, appears to continue. Only one breeding record was received. Notes on the fluctuation of numbers compared with previous years are particularly requested.

- E\* Epping Forest, one or two frequently seen between April and early June but breeding not confirmed (BSMs).
- H Aldenham Res., a cock on Jan. 5th (LAB).
- M Hampstead Heath, single birds were seen once in March and once in October (Royal Parks Report).  
Ken Wood, a hen first seen in the open being mobbed by Starlings dived into a Sparrow roost in the wood (DG, EK).  
Mill Hill, a cock on Dec. 27th (EHW). Ruislip Common, single birds on Apr. 11th and May 3rd (MC). Now very rare in this area, only seen on 5 out of 50 visits between April and December (BPP). Stanmore Common, a hen on June 11th (EHW). Inner London: Regents Park, a hen on Dec. 19th (EHW).
- K Bromley Common, one on Oct. 4th (AJG).
- S Ashtead Common, a cock on June 17th (SG). Beddington S.F., single birds on Mar. 31st (BRS), and May 7th (KSO). Bookham Common, probably now absent after decrease in recent years (GB). Dulwich/Crystal Palace, a pair bred in private woods (IRB), and at Dulwich Woods single birds were seen occasionally throughout the year (JAB).  
Esher Common, one on May 29th (BEC). Farleigh, one juvenile on July 16th (PFSC). Fetcham Downs, one on Jan. 15th (FB). Kew Gardens, one on Jan. 22nd (JESS). Kingston Vale, one circling over houses on Oct. 5th (BAM). Riddles Down, a cock on Feb. 12th (PFSC). South Croydon, one on Mar. 16th (RGB). Weybridge, single birds on Feb. 11th, Aug. 28th, Oct. 22nd (flying N.W.), and Nov. 12th, on which date a cock was seen to kill a Hedge Sparrow in the observer's garden; again on Dec. 16th a cock took a House Sparrow from a bird table. St. George's Hill, Weybridge, single hens on Aug. 30th and 31st (flushed from a dead Greenfinch), Nov. 25th (on ground plucking a Starling), Dec. 17th and a cock on Dec. 23rd (GHG).

**100 Hen Harrier**

- S Walton (South) Res., satisfactory details have been received of a hen seen gliding over the water causing panic among gulls and finally drifting N.W. pursued by a Carrion Crow on Dec. 23rd (SG).

**103 Osprey**

- M Brent Res., satisfactory details received of a single bird, mobbed by gulls as it circled over the water for 20 minutes, on Nov. 19th (EHW, LKW).

**104 Hobby**

Two pairs are known to have been in the area during the breeding season but their success in raising broods was not established.

- H Rye Meads S.F., a cock on May 12th (TWG).  
 M King George VI Res., Staines, one on Sept. 23rd (CMV). Perry Oaks S.F., one on Sept. 16th (HCD).  
 S Barn Elms Res., one on July 9th (AGV). Beddington S.F., on June 15th, as the observer approached to within three feet of a Snipe that was calling anxiously a Hobby, at the end of its stoop, collided with him, cutting his hand with its talons and striking his face with its wings. The bird flew off and was later seen to kill a Swallow and a Pied Wagtail (RSB). Esher Common, a cock on May 11th, 15th and June 25th (BAM, SG, KDE). Hersham S.F., one on Sept. 2nd (GHG). Princes Coverts, a cock on May 15th (SG). Walton-on-Thames, a cock carrying a small bird on May 20th (GHG).

**105 Peregrine**

- M Brent Res., one flying S.E. Jan. 29th (LAB). Osterley Park, an adult hen on Jan. 8th (DMP). Staines Res., a juvenile cock on Aug. 23rd (MC).  
 S Weybridge, one flying S. on Nov. 4th (GHG).

**107 Merlin**

- M Brent Res., one on Dec. 17th (LAB). Inner London: Regent's Park, one on Dec. 27th (DIMW).

**110 Kestrel**

All records received this year are being held over for a fuller report in a future issue of *L.B.R.*, since the present status of this bird in the London Area merits closer investigation. Observers are asked to continue to send in their records and to take special note of the rise or decline in the fortunes of the Kestrel in their own localities during 1963.

**115 Red-Legged Partridge**

Reported in the breeding season from:

- E Fairlop G.Ps., two to three pairs (ACP).  
 H Rye Meads S.F., two pairs bred (GCG, BSMs, RMRG).  
 M Harefield, one pair (BPP, WGT). King George VI Res., seven on May 11th (LAB). Ruislip, nest found on May 28th was apparently deserted on June 1st (WGT).







PLATE 1. ROOK INCUBATING *photographed by A. C. Parke.*



- K Bromley Common, a pair with young on July 5th (RF). Hayes, one pair (AWB). Dartford and Swanscombe marshes (WIB).  
 S Holmethorpe sandpit, one pair bred successfully (RLR, DS). Walton Res., two pairs (GHG).

### 117 Quail

- S Sanderstead, one calling on June 2nd (PFSC).

### 120 Water Rail

One pair bred at Rye Meads, Herts. (RMRG).

Recorded from 26 localities during the months January to April and August to December. Present at \*Nazeing G.P., Essex, up to May 14th (BSMs), and single birds seen at Gatton Park, Surrey, on May 23rd (HB), Silvermere, Surrey, on May 31st (GHG), Cheshunt G.P., Herts. on June 3rd (BSMs), Hilfield Park Res., on July 20th (BLS), and Beddington S.F., on July 23rd (BRS).

### 125 Corncrake

- E\* Sewardstone, a male found dead on May 10th (JCE).

### 127 Coot

- H Hilfield Park Res., flocks outside of the breeding season were smaller than in recent years, but were still high, the maxima being 340 on Feb. 4th and 905 on Sept. 16th (BLS).

### 131 Oystercatcher

- E Girling Res., single birds on Feb. 18th, May 21st, July 29th and Sept. 2nd (JF). N. Chingford, one on Aug. 17th (DT). Rainham, two on Aug. 7th and 17th (PJS). Sewardstone G.P., one on Nov. 25th (PFB). Walthamstow Res., one on Dec. 17th (RFS).  
 H Hilfield Park Res., one on Nov. 5th (EHW).  
 M Brent Res., three on Feb. 11th and 12th, one on May 1st and two on Dec. 30th (LAB, JGL, REFP, DT, WJW). Finchley, one on Apr. 24th (PJS). Mill Hill, one on Jan. 30th, May 12th and Nov. 3rd (EHW). Palmers Green, one flying E. at 2330 hrs. on Mar. 10th (RFP). Staines Res., one on May 27th and two flying W. on Aug. 12th (JBC, DGH).  
 K Swanscombe, three on Feb. 18th, four on Apr. 15th, three on May 30th and one on June 17th (MJC, FJH); two at pond near the sewage farm on May 3rd (WIB).  
 S Beddington S.F., one on Feb. 21st (BRS). Merstham, one heard flying north on Mar. 9th (RLR). Barn Elms Res., one on Mar. 14th (JJW).

### 133 Lapwing

Hard-weather and mid-summer movements followed the general pattern of previous years. Movements were noted almost daily in the Lea valley, Essex, and a total of 800 passed north over Rye Meads, Herts., on June 3rd. Small numbers were also seen moving

in directions varying from W.N.W. to S.W. over Surrey in June. On Feb. 5th there were very high numbers reported from three localities; 3,000 went N.W. over Staines Res., Middx., a flock of 1,000 was seen at Shenleybury, Herts., and 1,300 at Beddington S.F., Surrey. Extensive movements in a southerly direction were noted in late December, particularly in Surrey, with 3,000 at Addington on 26th, *c.* 3,000 in three hours at Weybridge on 27th and 2,000 in ninety minutes on 28th, on which date *c.* 1,500 passed over Ewell.

### 134 Ringed Plover

The maximum numbers in spring were recorded at Swanscombe Marshes, Kent, where up to *c.* 100 were present in April, with 19 still present on 3rd and 25 on June 14th. Autumn passage recorded from 14 localities from June 24th and 25th (single birds at Perry Oaks S.F., and Brent Res., Middx.) until Oct. 29th; largest numbers recorded at Swanscombe Marshes, Kent, with *c.* 300 on Aug. 17th (WIB) and *c.* 100 on Oct. 22nd (KDE).

Details of winter and breeding season records are given below.

- E Rainham, one on Dec. 12th and 21st (JHB).
- M Perry Oaks, one on Feb. 18th (DGH, DMP, JRP).
- K Swanscombe Marshes, *c.* 120 at high tide on Jan. 1st, 26 on Jan. 22nd, 12 on Feb. 26th (MJC, JMC, DIMW); 70 to 100 on Nov. 19th and 20 to 50 on 26th (KDE, MJC), five on 3rd and 50 on Dec. 25th (JGL, DJM). Four pairs are known to have nested (FJH).
- S Walton S. Res., at least one pair present during the breeding season, and behaviour was suggestive of breeding (WRI).

### 135 Little Ringed Plover

Approximately 36 pairs summered at 18 sites in the Area, about the same as in 1960.

- E\* About 10 pairs at six sites, of which nine pairs bred (KB, RB, JCE, ACP).
- H Six pairs at six sites of which five bred, at least three pairs reared young (RMRG, NR, TR, EHW).
- M Five pairs at two sites, at least four nests were destroyed by excavating activities (JBC, BSMs).
- K Six pairs at two sites, at least one pair bred successfully, one pair having a second brood (HFG, FJH).
- S At least nine pairs were present at two sites, but the exact number of young reared is uncertain (mo).  
The maximum autumn numbers reported were seven at Rainham, Essex, on July 7th and 11 on Sept. 6th (JHB, BJK).

### 139 Grey Plover

- E\* Girling Res., one in complete summer plumage on the unusual date of June 30th (BSMS). Romford S.F., one from Oct. 21st to 22nd (RRS).
- H Old Parkbury, one on Dec. 30th (EHW).

- M Perry Oaks S.F., one in summer plumage on May 17th to 18th (JBC, MC). Brent Res., one on Aug. 5th (LAB).  
 K Swanscombe, one on Nov. 5th (KHP).  
 S Walton S. Res., one in winter plumage on May 7th (DP), and two in full summer plumage on May 12th (IRB).

#### 140 Golden Plover

There are no records that can be certainly attributed to spring passage; the first autumn birds were noted at Rainham (two) and Romford S.F. (one), Essex, on July 22nd and 23rd. Maximum winter numbers are given below.

- H Shenleybury, 150 to 200 on Feb. 5th (EHW), and the exceptional number of 400 to 450 on Dec. 10th (BLS).  
 M Staines Moor, 100 on Jan. 1st and Feb. 5th (JBC). London Airport, 350 plus on Nov. 25th and Dec. 2nd (DGH, DMP).  
 S Beddington S.F., maximum of about 45 on Dec. 31st (BRS).

#### 143 Turnstone

- E\* Girling Res., one on May 21st (JCE). Rainham Marsh, two on July 22nd (RT) and one on Sept. 18th (JHB). Walthamstow Res., one on Aug. 6th (JF, RFS).  
 M Perry Oaks S.F., three on May 12th, one on May 20th and the unusual number of 10 on June 4th (JBC, DGH, JGL, *et al.*). Brent Res., one from May 27th to 29th (LAB, DT, WJW).  
 K Swanscombe Marshes, one on July 22nd and two on Aug. 13th, 15th and 17th (WIB, JCI, RWC, FJH, SKR).  
 S Barn Elms Res., two on Aug. 19th of which one had an injured leg and remained until Aug. 29th (MDK, LR, JS, PJS).

#### 145 Snipe

Breeding records are given in full.

- E\* Rainham Marsh, at least two breeding pairs in June (JHB, PJS).  
 H Eight pairs bred at Rye Meads (RMRG), and 18 pairs were present in the Lea valley north of Rye Meads (TWG).  
 S Beddington S.F., three pairs attempted to breed (BRS). Two nests were found by the River Wey at Weybridge on Apr. 3rd (GHG). The numbers wintering at Elmers End S.F., Kent, were similar to 1959 with *c.* 350 on Jan. 1st and *c.* 450 on Dec. 23rd. From 500 to 1,000 were present at Beddington S.F., Surrey, during December.

#### 147 Jack Snipe

Large numbers were reported from only one locality, Elmers End S.F., Kent, where there were 41 on Feb. 4th and 5th and 32 on Dec. 23rd (PM). There were records of odd birds at a few localities in March and April.

An adult ringed at Stanwell, Middx., on Oct. 15th, 1960, was recovered at La Guerinière, Ile de Noirmoutier, Vendée, France, on Dec. 24th, 1961.

#### 148 Woodcock

Records for the breeding season are given in full.

- E\* One roding at Warley on June 3rd (JF).
- H Present at seven localities in the Broxbourne Woods (TWG).
- B Two in Black Park, Iver, on May 5th (DGH).
- M One at Mill Hill on June 22nd (EHW).
- K One roding at Hosey Common, Westerham, on 17th June (JAB); one seen in Darenth Woods on June 29th (WIB).
- S Roding birds were noted during May at Bockham Common, Esher, Common, Headley Heath, Mickleham Downs, and Princes Coverts, Oxshott (various observers). One ringed at Beddington S.F., on Sept. 24th, 1959, was recovered at South Litchfield, Hants., on 14th Jan. 1961.

#### 150 Curlew

The number of localities at which this species was seen in each month is given below.

<i>Jan.</i>	<i>Feb.</i>	<i>Mar.</i>	<i>Apr.</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>
—	2	2	8	2	4
<i>July</i>	<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Sept.</i>	<i>Oct.</i>	<i>Nov.</i>	<i>Dec.</i>
6	12	6	3	6	9

The autumn passage commenced in July and reached a peak in August and September with maxima of 39 at Rainham, Essex, on Aug. 27th (JHB), and *c.* 200 passing over Barnehurst, Kent, between 1300 hrs. to 1500 hrs. on Sept. 17th (WIB).

#### 151 Whimbrel

There were spring records from eight localities on dates extending from April 22nd to May 21st, the maximum number at any one time being three. Autumn occurrences were reported from nine localities between July 7th and Aug. 20th with a maximum of five going south at Rye Meads, Herts., on Aug. 7th.

#### 154 Black-tailed Godwit

- E\* Rainham Marsh, single birds on Aug. 12th and 14th to 19th (BJK, PJS).
- M Perry Oaks S.F., one on May 9th (JBC).

#### 155 Bar-tailed Godwit

- M Brent Res., one on Sept. 17th (LAB).
- K Swanscombe Marshes, four on April 9th and two on 12th, and four (three in full summer plumage) on May 22nd (CAT, JGL).

**156 Green Sandpiper**

The number of localities at which this species occurred in each month is given below.

<i>Jan.</i>	<i>Feb.</i>	<i>Mar.</i>	<i>Apr.</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>
4	1	4	4	2	1
<i>July</i>	<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Sept.</i>	<i>Oct.</i>	<i>Nov.</i>	<i>Dec.</i>
15	19	6	7	6	15

Comparison of this data with that for 1959 and 1960 shows a similar pattern with the main autumn movement in July and August, but with an increase in December records in 1961. The maximum numbers were recorded in Essex with up to 14 at Nazeing G.P., between June 24th and July 1st, and 16 at Rainham on Aug. 1st.

**157 Wood Sandpiper**

Very few spring records, there being single birds at two localities on May 21st, one on May 23rd and another on May 28th, and one on June 4th. The autumn records extend from July 1st to October 1st. The main movements occurred in July and August with records from six localities on ten dates in the former, and 13 localities on twenty dates in the latter. The maximum reported at any one time was 7 at Romford S.F.\* on Aug. 9th and 10th.

**159 Common Sandpiper**

There were no reports of breeding, circumstantial or otherwise. There were records for every month of the year except November; the winter records come from three localities in December, one in January, and three in February. The high numbers reported from Inner London in 1960 did not recur, the maximum at any one place being two. The highest numbers for the year at any one locality were 20 plus at Rainham,\* Essex, on Aug. 19th and *c.* 40 at Swanscombe, Kent, on Aug. 15th.

**161 Redshank**

There were winter records from seventeen localities, the most regular series coming from Swanscombe Marshes, Kent, where up to 60 were present in February and *c.* 130 on Mar. 18th (JMC). The only other numbers in excess of 100 were *c.* 130 at Littlebrook, Kent, on Dec. 28th (JCI, RWC). Breeding season records are given in full.

- E\* Fishers Green G.P., two pairs bred. Nazeing G.P., one pair bred (BSMs). Rainham Marsh, at least four pairs present during breeding season (JHB).
- H Cheshunt area, one pair with three eggs located (TR). Rye Meads, five pairs reared 16 young (RMRG).
- M Staines Moor, three nests found on June 4th (EJC). Stanwell Moor, two pairs bred (JBC).
- K Littlebrook, about three pairs bred. Swanscombe Marshes, at least four pairs bred (FJH).

- S Walton South Res., three pairs bred, all of which hatched young successfully (SG, WRI, AQ).  
One Inner London record, three flying N.E. over Lambeth Bridge on Apr. 21st (GHG).

### 162 Spotted Redshank

- E Rainham Marsh, one on the unusual date of June 18th (JHB); present on five dates from Aug. 20th to Sept. 5th, with three on Aug. 26th, six on Sept. 1st and two on Sept. 3rd (PJF, JDM, PJS).  
H Rye Meads, one flying south on Sept. 3rd (RMRG).  
M Brent Res., three on Sept. 17th (LAB). Perry Oaks S.F., two on Aug. 20th (JGL), and one on Sept. 16th (KDE).  
S Walton Res., one on Apr. 27th flew off N.W. (IRB).  
K Swanscombe Marshes, one on Aug. 12th (PWB), and one on Sept. 3rd (CAT).

### 165 Greenshank

The spring records extend from May 17th to June 28th; these are given in full. There is a single winter record of one at Swanscombe Marshes, Kent, on Feb. 18th (DJM), satisfactory details have been received.

- E\* Rainham Marsh, two on 4th and one on June 13th (JHB, PJS).  
M Perry Oaks S.F., one from May 17th to 18th and 21st, and two on 22nd (JBC, PRC). Stanwell Moor, one on May 17th (MC).  
K Swanscombe Marshes, one on May 20th (DJM), 22nd (JGL), and June 28th (CEW).  
Autumn records cover the period July 11th to Oct. 21st, the maximum being 14 flying south at Rye Meads, Herts., on Sept. 3rd (RMRG).

### 169 Knot

There were no records at all from Essex, Herts., Bucks., or Surrey, and the high numbers recorded at Swanscombe Marshes, Kent, in 1960 did not recur.

- M Perry Oaks S.F., single birds on April 2nd and 7th to 8th, and Nov. 18th to 19th (RB, AJC, DGH, GH, JGL, CAW).  
K Swanscombe Marshes, six on Jan. 14th; seven on Feb. 4th, 32 on 18th; two on Apr. 9th and one on 16th (WIB, TEB, MJC, FJH, JGL, SKR), two on Aug. 12th (PWB).

### 171 Little Stint

- E Nazeing G.P., three on Aug. 26th and one on 27th (BSMS). Rainham Marsh, present from Aug. 7th to Sept. 19th with a maximum of six on Aug. 19th (JHB, GD, B & BJK). Walthamstow Res., one on Sept. 5th (JF).  
M Perry Oaks S.F., one on May 23rd (JBC, DGH). In autumn recorded on thirteen dates from July 22nd to Nov. 5th, an even more protracted passage than in 1960, but the maximum was only six on Oct. 22nd (many observers).

- K Swanscombe Marshes, an unusually early record of one on Mar. 25th and 26th (MJC, RBT) and one or two on Apr. 1st (FJH); in the autumn two were seen on July 29th, and up to six on 10 dates from Sept. 3rd to Nov. 5th, terminating with one or two on Nov. 19th and one on Nov. 26th (MJC, JMC, KDE, FJH, KOS).

S Barn Elms Res., one on Oct. 7th to 8th (MJC, KVE).

### 173 Temminck's Stint

- S Holmethorpe Sandpit, one on the unusual date of June 4th (RLR). Satisfactory details have been received.

### 178 Dunlin

Winter records away from the Thames Estuary at thirteen localities. As in 1960 high numbers were reported from Swanscombe Marsh, Kent, with a maximum of *c.* 1,200 from Jan. 1st to 22nd; *c.* 200 in Feb., *c.* 120 in Mar., from 200 to 350 on Apr. 8th to 29th, and 120 on May 13th. The build-up commenced again in October with 80 on 7th rising to *c.* 200 by 22nd. In November there were *c.* 800 on 12th and *c.* 600 on 26th. The December maximum was 1,200 on 10th.

### 179 Curlew Sandpiper

- E Brentwood S.F., one on Aug. 26th (RBW). Rainham Marsh,\* two on Aug. 7th, and up to five from Sept. 1st to 6th (JHB, PJF, B & BJK, JDM, PJS).
- M Brent Res., two on May 6th (LAB), and one on Sept. 4th (WJW). Perry Oaks S.F., one on Aug. 9th (DMP).
- K Swanscombe Marshes, recorded on eight dates from July 29th to Oct. 22nd with maximum of eight on Aug. 6th (JMC).

### 181 Sanderling

- E\* Nazeing G.P., one on Aug. 26th (BSMs).
- M Brent Res., one on May 6th (MDK, DT, WJW). King George VI Res., one on May 17th (MC). Perry Oaks S.F., one on May 20th and July 20th (MC, JRP).
- K Swanscombe Marshes, single birds on Jan. 8th, Feb. 18th, May 22nd, two on May 28th, and one on Dec. 30th (JMC, JGL, DJM, HLR).
- S Barn Elms Res., one on May 10th and two in full summer plumage on May 20th; one on July 17th (AJC, FCR, TRS). Gatton Park, three in summer plumage on May 23rd (HB). Walton South Res., one on May 14th (RPC).

### 184 Ruff

The usual wintering flock was present in the Perry Oaks area, with 23 on Feb. 14th and 28 on Mar. 5th. In the later months of the year numbers were higher than in 1960 with 24 on Oct. 18th, *c.* 30 on Nov. 19th and 22 on Dec. 10th. The remaining winter records are one at Romford S.F., Essex, on Jan. 29th and Dec. 24th and 31st, Brent Res., Middx., one on Feb. 19th (LAB, DT), Swanscombe

Marsh, Kent, one on Jan. 14th and two on Dec. 25th (TEB, FJH, JGL), Beddington S.F., Surrey, one on Dec. 17th and 26th to 28th (BRS). Spring records away from the main wintering area are one at Rye Meads, Herts., on Apr. 30th (RMRG), one at Brent Res., Middx., on Mar. 18th and 30th (DT, EHW), and five at Swanscombe Marshes, Kent, on Apr. 1st and 9th (FJH, CAT) and one at Stone on June 11th (CEW). Autumn passage was recorded at ten localities from July 18th until October, with a maximum of 32 at Perry Oaks on Sept. 16th.

### 187. Grey Phalarope

- E Girling and King George V Res., one present from Nov. 1st to 6th (JCE, JF, BSMs).
- M King George VI Res., one from Nov. 25th to 26th (RSB, JFC, JRH, AQ, CMV). Staines Res., single birds on Dec. 2nd to 3rd and 9th to 10th (RSB, JGC, DGH, *et al.*). It is possible that these records all refer to the same bird.
- K Swanscombe Marshes, one on Oct. 22nd (MJC, KDE).

### 189 Stone Curlew

- H/E\* On July 12th a party of three flew south over Rye Meads, Herts., and passed into Essex (JC, JGC, TWG).
- S Walton South Res., one on Sept. 3rd (SKR, BS).

### 193 Arctic Skua

- M Staines Res., one came in from the S.E. and departed westwards on July 21st (JBC); another seen harrying two terns on Aug. 19th (AJC).

**Observers are asked to send in as many records as possible of counts of gulls during the winter of 1962-1963 in support of the B.T.O. inquiry into inland roosts.**

### 198 Great Black-backed Gull

Observers appear to be paying a little more attention to this species, but more records are still needed. Selected records are given below.

- E\* An increase in the numbers roosting at the Lea valley reservoirs was noted with 560 on Nov. 18th and 700 on Dec. 16th (BSMs).
- H Hilfield Park Res., *c.* 160 adults and *c.* 280 immatures on Nov. 11th (BLS).
- S Walton Res., immatures found dead on Mar. 5th and Nov. 4th were wearing Russian rings (GHG, JGL). Between 850 to 1,000 were present on Dec. 2nd (AJC).

### 199 Lesser Black-backed Gull

Reported numerously from many localities during spring and autumn migration. The maximum winter numbers are given below.

- E\* Lea valley reservoirs, up to 500 roosting in January (BSMs).



- H Hilfield Park Res., *c.* 600 adults and *c.* 850 immatures roosting on Nov. 11th (BLS).  
 S Beddington S.F., 220 on Dec. 24th (BRS).

### 200 Herring Gull

A welcome increase in the numbers of observers submitting records of this species. The most important reports in excess of 100 birds are given below.

- E\* William Girling and King George V Reservoirs, 9,000 to 11,000 roosting during November and December (BSMs). Walthamstow Res., 400 on Feb. 4th (RFS).  
 M Dukes Meadows, Chiswick, up to 500 from July 15th to 26th (RHK).  
 S Epsom, *c.* 340 on playing field near rubbish tip on Feb. 17th and *c.* 200 on Dec. 26th (MJC). Hammersmith, *c.* 200 on the Thames on Dec. 10th (PJS). Walton-on-Thames, 174 on rubbish tip on Dec. 28th (GHG).

### 201 Common Gull

Reports of passage and wintering birds follow the normal pattern. The maxima were *c.* 450 immatures at Swanscombe, Kent, on May 28th (JMC); 324 on Hersham playing fields on Nov. 8th and *c.* 350 on a rubbish tip at Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, on Dec. 28th (GHG).

### 202 Glaucous Gull

- E\* Girling Res., an adult found dead on Dec. 25th (JF). This bird is now in the National Collection at Kensington.

### 203 Iceland Gull

- M Brent Res., an immature on Feb. 1st (LAB).

### 207 Little Gull

- E\* King George V Res., one on Nov. 25th. Walthamstow Res., two juveniles on Aug. 31st (JF).  
 M Staines Res., one on Apr. 12th, and an immature on Apr. 22nd to 23rd; in autumn, three immatures on Sept. 1st and two on Sept. 16th (BEC, JBC, MC, KDE, DGH, DMP).  
 S Barn Elms Res., an adult and an immature on Oct. 8th (JGL, PJS, AGV).

### 208 Black-headed Gull

A total of six pairs bred and at least 11 young reached the free flying stage at Maple Cross, Herts. (MC, IGJ, KRJ, JDM, BPP); this is the first breeding record for the county. The colony at Perry Oaks S.F., Middx., dropped to a little below the 1959 level, there were *c.* 300 adults in May and *c.* 125 nests, but few young were reared (PRC, DGH, JAJ).

Birds ringed in London in November 1952 and January 1959, were recovered at Uusimaa, Finland in May 1960, and Daugavpils, Latvian S.S.R. in August 1960 respectively.

**211 Kittiwake**

- E\* King George V. Res., one found dead on Mar. 22nd and an immature seen on Mar. 25th (JF, FJL, RFP).
- M Brent Res., two adults on Jan. 25th and one on Mar. 31st (LAB, RWG). Queen Mary Res., an adult on Mar. 31st (JBC). Staines Res., two adults on Mar. 19th and one on Mar. 26th, an immature on July 28th (JBC, CMV).
- K Littlebrook, an oiled bird on Nov. 25th (FJH). Swanscombe Marshes, an immature on Mar. 25th (RBT), and an adult and an immature on Nov. 19th (MJC, KDE, JGS).
- S Barn Elms Res., an adult on Jan. 8th and 22nd (LAB, BAM, PJÖ, WGT). Beddington S.F., an adult on Feb. 18th (BRS). Walton Res., two adults on Sept. 16th and one found dead on Dec. 28th (KDE, WRI). Inner London: a sub-adult passed north over Primrose Hill, Regent's Park, on Mar. 15th (DMW).

**212 Black Tern**

The earliest spring records this year were two at Staines Res., on Apr. 26th and three at Brent Res., Middx., on Apr. 29th. Following these early arrivals there was a lull until May 12th when one was seen at King George V Res., Essex, and eight at Staines Res., Middx. The peak of the spring passage came the following day, May 13th, when with a high pressure area over the English Channel and a light S.W. wind, a total of about 260 birds was recorded at six localities, the maxima being a flock of 127 at Staines, and 60 to 80 at Queen Mary Res. There were records on six further dates from May 14th to 21st, and a late straggler at Staines on June 25th.

The autumn passage, which extended from July 7th to Oct. 14th, produced far fewer birds than in the spring. There were records from three localities on seven dates in August, and from eight localities on eleven dates in September, the maximum being a total of 12 birds Sept. 17th.

**213 White-winged Black Tern**

- M Queen Mary Res., an adult in summer plumage on May 13th to 14th (RSB, CH, DGM *et al.*), the first occurrence of this species in the London Area.

**214 Whiskered Tern**

- M Staines Res., one on June 24th and 25th (RJ, MN, DP, DGW). This is the first record of this species in the London Area.

**216 Caspian Tern**

- E\* King George V Res., one present from Aug. 26th to 27th (BSMS, FR). Walthamstow Res., an adult on July 9th (JF, RWG). This also is a new species for the area.

**217/218 Common/Arctic Tern**

The spring passage commenced with single birds on Apr. 8th and 29th and continued until June 4th. The numbers involved were very small and were scattered over the area, mostly during May; maxima a total of six birds at two localities on May 13th and 16th. The return passage commenced in mid-June and persisted until Oct. 12th. The maximum numbers were 15 at Nazeing G.P., Essex, on June 29th, 26 at Brent Res., Middx., on Aug. 8th, 10 at Barn Elms Res., Surrey, on Aug. 8th and 13th, and 14 at the Lea valley reservoirs, Essex, on Sept. 14th.

**219 Roseate Tern**

S The third record for the London Area, two at Barn Elms Res., on July 18th (BAM).

**222 Little Tern**

M Brent Res., an adult on Apr. 30th (LAB, MDK, WJW).

**223 Sandwich Tern**

E\* Girling Res., 14 on Sept. 14th and two on the 18th (JCE). Nazeing G.P., one on July 22nd (BSMS). Rainham Marsh, six on Sept. 19th (BK). Walthamstow Res., one on Aug. 20th (RWG).

H Hilfield Park Res., one on Apr. 2nd (EHW).

M Perry Oaks S.F., three on Apr. 26th (MC). Staines Res., one on July 13th and 31st (JBC). Springwell G.P., an adult and an immature on Sept. 25th (IGJ).

K Swanscombe Marshes, three on Aug. 20th (WIB).

**224 Razorbill**

E\* Walthamstow Res., one found dead on Sept. 11th (JJW).

**230 Puffin**

E\* A first winter bird found exhausted at South Stifford on Nov. 4th was released at Bradwell on the 14th (ABO).

S An exhausted bird was found sheltering in a garden shed at Shirley about Nov. 4th (per RGB). One on the Thames at Putney Bridge on Nov. 8th (JR).

**232 Stock Dove**

Recorded in the five main counties and in Inner London, this species remains fairly widespread in the London Area but it disappeared completely from four regularly watched areas and decreases in population were noted for several others. No evidence of successful breeding was submitted and it seems clear that the suspected decline in this bird's numbers is real (see also *E.B.R.*, 1961: 33).

**Observers are asked to note all Stock Doves in 1963, especially during the breeding season.**

In *The Birds of the London Area since 1900*, there are no fully accepted records of migration in this species and even the London Migration Watch, 1960, failed to produce any conclusive evidence of movement. In 1961, however, one record showed that it occurs: on Nov. 12th, a total of 15 birds in three parties flew W. or N.W. over Primrose Hill, Inner London (DIMW). A considerable passage was in progress at the time with *c.* 845 migrants noted between 0835 and 1015 hrs. GMT, the commonest species involved being Fieldfare, Starling and Wood Pigeon.

### 234 Wood Pigeon

Do Wood Pigeons migrate? One London bird at last has definitely done so: a squab ringed by PM at Elmers End S.F., Kent, on June 4th was shot at Riaillé, Loire Atlantique, France on Nov. 11th. These localities are some 300 miles apart, both within a degree of the Greenwich Meridian, and the journey indicated is without precedent. The directions of three large movements over the London Area on Oct. 29th were S.W., S.S.W. and S.S.E. and it is possible that the bird recovered took part in this passage. Later in November the most common directions of migrant flocks were in reverse of those in October, apart from one huge flock of 4/5,000 flying S.E. over Weybridge, Surrey, on Nov. 9th (GHG). This movement might also have contained London's first definite emigrant Wood Pigeon. As in 1960, movements continued into December.

### Collared Dove

The first birds of a flock present at Carshalton, Surrey, and numbering *c.* 12 on Jan. 28th and Feb. 4th, 1962, appeared "before Christmas," 1961 (per mjc).

### 237 Cuckoo

The records submitted include evidence of a decline for six breeding localities in Kent and Surrey, but at least in the Weybridge and Walton areas of the latter county the summer population has remained at the same strength since 1958 (GHG) and it is not yet clear whether this species is suffering a severe decline (see also *E.B.R.*, 1961: 34).

### 241 Barn Owl

Altogether sixteen pairs were located in the London Area, but few records were submitted for Hertfordshire (*cf.* *L.B.R.*, 24: 40). Nevertheless the numbers of places in which this owl was noted in the breeding season rose to twenty-one and it has now been recorded in at least 44 localities in the last three summers.

There were two reports from built-up areas: one pair bred at Southgate, Middx. (BSMs), and a single bird was seen at Kingsbury, Middx., on Sept. 7th (wjwt).

**246 Little Owl**

The few records submitted (seven from three counties) probably reflect more the lack of interest of observers than the current status of this bird, but BPP notes that it is "now very rare" in the Ruislip area of Middx. and there were no records for Inner London.

**As noted in the *E.B.R.*, 1961: 34, this species may be affected by toxic chemicals and observers should consider whether it is still "a common resident" in the London Area.**

**249 Short-eared Owl**

All records are given.

- E\* Girling Res., one on Jan. 1st and Feb. 11th (JF, BSMs). Romford S.F., single birds on Mar. 19th, Apr. 7th, Oct. 7th and 14th (RRS).
- M Perry Oaks S.F., one on Feb. 25th (DIMW, KAW). Stanmore Common, one on Jan. 8th (EHW).
- K Swanscombe, one on Feb. 18th (FJH, DJM).
- S Beddington S.F., one on Apr. 5th (BRS).

**252 Nightjar**

All records are given.

- E\* Warley, one churring in June (MSF).
- H Broxbourne Woods, at least 11 pairs bred (TWG).
- B Iver, Black Park, two pairs on June 3rd (DMP), and four birds, including one pair, on June 16th (DGH).
- K Darenth Woods, two on June 29th. WIB comments that "after being absent for some years, these birds have returned to an area much opened up by gypsies" and that churring could be heard "above the sound of their television sets." Hosey Common, Westerham, one churring on June 3rd, 4th and 29th, two on the 17th (JAB, VAG, WGT). Joyden's Wood, between Bexley and Sidcup, three pairs, one rearing two young (JCI, JMC, RWC, AW). Ruxley G.P., one on June 3rd (JCI).
- S Banstead and Walton Heaths, up to six seen and heard between June 17th and Aug. 17th (MJC, IBM). Esher Common, two in June and July (BEC, JFC, KDE, AQ). Farleigh, one pair probably bred (PFSC). Headley Heath, present from May 29th to July 18th: at least one pair with another churring on June 12th (RPC, GIWH, MAH, IBM). Limpsfield Chart, two calling on July 10th (DS). Oxshott, two pairs bred in Princes Coverts (MJC, SG, DP).

Summarizing the records for 1959, 1960 and 1961, it seems clear that in metropolitan Essex and Middlesex the decrease of this species continues. Elsewhere however, the evidence, though not complete, suggests at least a scattered but stable breeding population.

**255 Swift**

A nest hole at Mill Hill, Middx., was used for the 39th successive year (EHW).

**259 Kingfisher**

More records were received than usual and breeding season observations came from six localities north of the Thames and nine to the South. Birds were notably more widespread in autumn and winter with records from over thirty places including Inner London. Evidence of passage, or considerable local movement, was obtained by the Rye Meads (Herts.) Ringing Group, who ringed nine during the autumn.

**261 Hoopoe**

Ruxley G.P., one on July 30th (FJH).

**Woodpeckers**

There was no evidence of any real change in status of any species, although the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was noted in no less than 40 localities (31 in 1960).

Inner London: All three species were seen in Regent's Park on Apr. 12th, an unique coincidence (DIMW). Juvenile Great Spotted Woodpeckers were again seen in Regent's Park and Holland Park, while a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker frequented the latter place from March to May 28th (EPB, RBR).

**265 Wryneck**

Apparently much more widespread in Kent than formerly thought. Full details of all records in 1960 and 1961 have not yet been received but birds or breeding pairs were found in the year under review at Downe (IRB), Greenhithe (FJH, KOS), Horns Cross, near Dartford (CAT), Northfleet (CAT), Swanscombe (CAT) and at Westerham (KOS). A review of all recent Kent records will be published in 1963. In Surrey, single birds were noted at Addington on Sept. 24th (RNFS), at Chipstead on Apr. 10th (LIC, per HB), at Cobham on Apr. 25th (IRB), and at Weybridge Heath on May 2nd (GHG).

**271 Woodlark**

All records are given.

- E\* Epping Forest, one pair bred at High Beech (BSMs). Havering, one on Mar. 26th (JHB, JGC).
- M Brent Res., one on July 30th (LAB). King George VI Res., two flying W. on Nov. 25th (DGH). Queen Mary Res., one on Apr. 14th (LAB). Ruislip Common, a hen on May 27th (EHW).
- B Iver, in Black Park a pair on May 5th and one on June 16th (DGH, DMP).
- K Bromley Common, one on Apr. 17th (KOS *Bulletin*).

- S Ballards Plantation, one singing on June 17th (AJG). Esher Common, one pair from Mar. 18th to June 24th (BEC, SG). Headley Heath, one on July 24th (GMC). Juniper Top, two on Mar. 16th and between May 2nd and 19th (IRB, GMC). New Ham, near Weybridge, observed but no dates given (LH). Ockham Common, one on Apr. 25th (IRB). Oxshott Heath, one on May 6th (IRB). Richmond Park, up to four between Mar. 15th and Aug. 8th (AJG). Wimbledon Common, one on May 25th (RHK).

### 272 Skylark

A flood-tide of Skylarks began to pass over the London Area in the last three days of the year, their mass exodus and that of other species from the Arctic conditions general in W. Europe at that time continuing into January, 1962.

On Dec. 31st, a day of almost continuous snow, passage rates of up to a thousand birds per hour were recorded and counts at twelve localities in the London Area of both flying and grounded birds totalled 17,647. The direction of flight varied little, between S. and S.W., and it is probable that *c.* 200,000 birds crossed the 40 mile diameter of the London Area on a broad front during the hours of daylight. Passage continued into the night.

### 273 Shore Lark

- S Walton S. Res., three on Oct. 28th (AN). Full details were received of this, the second record for the London Area since 1900.

### 277 Sand Martin

One seen at Fetcham Mill Ponds, Surrey, on Mar. 12th (MJC, MJCD), antedated the previous earliest spring record by three days and was only two days behind the first bird to reach Britain (cf. *L.B.R.*, 24: 44 and *Bird Migration*, 2 (1): 21).

No less than twelve Sand Martins, ringed as juveniles in Britain during the summer, were recorded between July 7th and Aug. 5th at Romford, Essex. Of five ringed to the north, one had come *c.* 420 miles from Kinraig, Inverness; another ringed to the east, at Standord-Le-Hope, Essex, was first recovered at Aylesford, Kent, before re-crossing the Thames to Romford; of six ringed to the south, one first caught at Steyning, Sussex, flew *c.* 50 miles N.E. to Romford, thus adding at least another hundred to its first migration. This species holds its own in the London Area (see *L.B.R.*, 25: 69) and the apparently haphazard wanderings of the birds noted above may be due simply to "the need to pass time" before mass departures to the south. The one foreign recovery in 1961 was of a juvenile ringed at Sevenoaks, Kent, on July 23rd and found near Orleans, Loiret, France, on Aug. 7th.

### 280 Carrion Crow

For notes on unusually aggressive behaviour, see p. 112.

**281 Hooded Crow**

- M Charlton G.P., one on Mar. 19th and 25th (JBC, MC, DMP).  
 K Ruxley G.P., one on Mar. 12th (JCI, RWC).  
 S Island Barn Res., Molesey Rubbish Tip and S.F., a single bird, once two, between Jan. 22nd and Mar. 26th (JFC, SG, PJO, DP, JRP).

**282 Rook**

The only evidence of the once dramatic autumn movements of this species was a passage of *c.* 500 S. along the Lea Valley, observed at Rye Meads S.F., Herts., on Nov. 18th and 19th (RMRG).

Unusually prominent in Inner London, particularly in early spring, with single birds recorded regularly in Regent's Park in March and up to Apr. 23rd (DIMW, EHW). in Bloomsbury Square from Mar. 28th to Apr. 17th (sc, RHK) and another at Lambeth on Mar. 11th (ACP). One was cawing in Finsbury Circus on June 23rd, a quite exceptional occurrence (HGG). Eleven, in a migrant flock, flew S.W. over Waterloo at 0805 hrs. G.M.T., on Nov. 27th (GHG).

**283 Jackdaw**

Now apparently absent from Inner London in summer, but it may be that the birds which formerly bred in Kensington Gardens, nest elsewhere in that area. On Mar. 1st, at least three pairs were feeding with feral pigeons in the south-west corner of the gardens; once satisfied, two of the three pairs flew up to the rooftops to the south. All the birds were tame and were undoubtedly those formerly resident (DIMW).

**284 Magpie**

An attempt by this species to penetrate further into the metropolis, forecast in *L.B.R.*, 25: 39, continued in the year under review. In central London, a single bird frequented Regent's Park in January and February; it or another was present there from Mar. 31st to Apr. 6th (DIMW). Other single birds were seen, chattering on the roof of Temple Church on Aug. 29th (PBL), and in the Lambeth/Westminster and Millbank area of the Thames and also in Bishop's Park, Fulham, in September and throughout October (GHG, PJS). South of the river, breeding population increases were noted at Green Street Green, Kent (PMW), and at Weybridge and Walton, Surrey (GHG). In the latter areas, it was noted as "annually more bold in the presence of man, a regular visitor to bird tables and breeding in quite small gardens of a third of an acre." Similar comment comes from East Molesey, where "during the autumn and winter," the Magpie "seems to have become much more of a garden bird" (PJO). Also in Surrey, there were two pairs in Dulwich Woods during the breeding season (JAB), two or three pairs on Mitcham Common and one pair at Beddington S.F. (BRS); a single bird was seen at Crystal Palace on Apr. 27th (AFM). In the northern



half of the London Area, breaks through the previous limits of distribution in Middlesex were even more definite with records of single birds at N. Ealing on Feb. 21st and at Perivale Wood on June 19th (PMS), the arrival of at least one resident pair at Hendon (EHW) and the continued presence of two or three pairs on Hampstead Heath (cf. *Birds of the London Area Since 1900*, p. 235, and *L.B.R.*, 25: 39).

Though the records summarized above do not constitute the beginning of an invasion, it appears that Magpies are poised to enter London.

## 286 Jay

This is an irruptive species and for the first time since 1957, there were widespread reports south of the Thames (from Green St. Green, Kent, to Mersham, Surrey) of an autumn increase in numbers. Even in Inner London, Jays were prominent in the late autumn, in the last half of October on Primrose Hill and in Regent's Park particularly, while the following direct observations of movement were made:—

M Inner London: Lambeth, three flying high at 08.24 hrs. B.S.T., on Oct. 5th (GHG).

K Elmers End S.F., 13 flying high to N. on Oct. 8th (PM).

S Shirley, two moving N.W. on Oct. 29th (RGB). Weybridge, four passing N.W. at 08.42 hrs. G.M.T., on Oct. 22nd and seven flying high to N.W. at 08.12 hrs. G.M.T., on Nov. 19th (GHG).

A movement of Jays was recorded at only one South Coast observatory (see *Bird Migration*, 2 (2): 71).

## Tits

Autumn tit movements have become almost annual in the London Area since 1957 and it seems clear that the population dynamics of this family in W. Europe and Britain have been far from stable in recent years. In early autumn, 1961, small movements of Great, Blue and Coal Tits were noted in Inner London from Sept. 7th to Oct. 26th, with a single record of two Marsh Tits in Regent's Park on Sept. 8th (EHW), and several observations of Long-tailed Tits on Oct. 2nd, 5th, 13th, 18th and 24th. Up to November, all but one of the directions noted for moving birds were between S.W. and S.E. As with Long-tailed Tits in 1960 (*L.B.R.*, 25: 41), a fresh influx of birds began to appear in early November, particularly of the last named species, but most records were of fairly sedentary parties. Some movements were noted elsewhere in the London Area, mostly in the S.E.; of these, the most striking was that of Blue Tits crossing the Thames to Swanscombe, Kent, on Oct. 22nd (MJC, KDE).

A national summary of other records appears in *Bird Migration*, 2 (2): 76-77.

## 294 Long-tailed Tit

The origin of birds reaching Inner London, summarized in the last section, is likely to have been local (rather than from abroad), since

records of unusual numbers and high breeding success came in Essex, from Epping Forest and the vales north-west of Epping; in Middlesex, from Hampstead Heath; in Kent, from Barnehurst, Crayford, Green St. Green and the Chislehurst area—two adults had no less than 14 young with them at Chislehurst on May 22nd (JCI, RWC)—and in Surrey, from Bookham Common (more abundant than for 10 or 15 years), Esher, Richmond Park, Sanderstead, Weybridge and Wimbledon Common (exceptionally large numbers of family parties in June). Four at Woodford Green, Essex, on Jan. 6th were feeding on the ground (JAB). The editor of this section of the report has never seen a Long-tailed Tit on the ground in twenty years bird-watching.

### 293 Willow Tit

All records are given.

- E\* Upshire, a pair at Aimes Green on June 13th (JHB). Havering, a pair on Mar. 26th (JHB, JGC). Parndon Woods, noted in spring and summer (DIMW and per *E.B.R.*, 1961).
- H Aldenham Res., a pair with two young on June 25th (WJW). Broxbourne Woods, three pairs bred (TWG). Old Parkbury, two on July 30th (FJC) and a pair in November and December (EHW).
- M Hayes, one at Coldharbour Lane Farm on Nov. 12th (PEB). Perivale Wood, one on Nov. 9th (PMS). 'Ruislip, "several family parties" seen in Copsewood and on common during breeding season (BPP). Scratch Wood, two pairs bred (EHW). Spout Wood, one pair during breeding season (DMP).
- K Shoreham, two in Barnetts Wood on June 24th (JFB, BC). West Wickham, one pair throughout the year (DH).
- S Banstead Heath, a pair on Mar. 12th and one on July 24th (HB). Bookham Common, up to three all year, one pair bred (GB, JR). Gatton Park, two cocks singing on Apr. 13th (HB). Headley Heath, one pair on Apr. 8th (HB). Kingswood Warren, a pair on Sept. 10th (HB). Littleheath Woods, a pair in March and April, one on Dec. 17th (DB). Oxshott Clay Pits, one on Jan. 22nd (GB). Selsdon Wood, four pairs in breeding season (DS), two on Dec. 17th (AJH). Shirley, one at Oaks Farm on Dec. 16th (RGB). Tadworth, one singing from early February to early May, two on June 18th (HB).

### 295 Bearded Tit

Although the records for 1960 were not in fact the first for the London Area (see p. 59 for details), this species again provided exceptional records in 1961.

- E\* Rainham, up to ten calling in Berwick Pond on Dec. 13th and 14th, three or four on Dec. 20th (MJA). Walthamstow Res., the party of 15 first seen on Oct. 16th, 1960, remained intact until mid-February (JF), but only one pair remained on Mar. 19th (RFS), and none was seen after a cock bird on Apr. 29th (BSMS).
- H Stanborough, two by the River Lea on Jan. 2nd (GK), had been present since Nov. 30th, 1960. Rye Meads S.F., 17 on Oct. 12th

(LLE), four on the 21st (TWG *et al.*) and one on Dec. 17th (TWG); the birds in October were observed to cross the Essex boundary.

- M Perry Oak S.F., the solitary cock, first seen on Nov. 26th, 1960, stayed until Feb. 20th (mo) and must have wished for a less attractive neighbour than the Greenish Warbler, which drew hordes of observers to the few upstanding reeds inhabited by the reedling!
- K Swanscombe, the five present throughout November and December, 1960, remained until Feb. 26th (WIB, JMC, MJC, DJM), no spring or summer records but several reappeared on Nov. 19th (MJC, KDE, JGS) and the presence of six was confirmed on the 26th; these stayed on to the year end (BEC, JCI, RWC, JGL, AQ *et al.*). The observers concerned were certain that although one bird was seen to be ringed, none of the party was the same as any of the five ringed in November 1960 and this was fully proved early in 1962 (JGS). The late February departure from three localities should be noted and also that the autumn records result from the third successive eruption from East Anglia (cf. *E.B.R.*, 1961: 37).

## 296 Nuthatch

The continued presence of this species as a breeding bird in Inner London is very encouraging and its occurrences there are noted in full.

- M Inner London: Holland Park, two pairs bred and at least one remained throughout the year (EPB). Kensington Gardens, two pairs suspected to be present during the year, but no young were seen (PJS, RFS, EHW). Lambeth, one on Feb. 14th and Dec. 19th (GHG). Regent's Park, one on Apr. 11th (EHW).

## 298 Tree Creeper

Records of this species were submitted from Hertfordshire, Surrey and Inner London only. Observers are asked to take careful note of Tree Creepers in 1963; it is not a common species but in 1961 there were unusual records suggesting an irruptive movement to and through Britain. All records will be welcome.

- M Inner London: Holland Park, one on Feb. 19th (EPB). Kensington Gardens, single birds noted at all seasons (RFS, RPP), but no proof of breeding. Regent's Park, one with Long-tailed Tits apparently moving W. on Nov. 18th (DIMW).

What were thought to be migrant Tree Creepers were seen at Rye Meads S.F., Herts., on Nov. 18th and 26th, but these records with the last above make up the only evidence to suggest that London saw the aftermath of widespread observatory occurrences between July 24th and Oct. 29th (see *Bird Migration*, 2 (2): 77-78, and *L.B.R.*, 25: 41).

## 299 Wren

A high count of *c.* 70 at Rye Meads S.F., Herts., on Oct. 14th was noted as unusual (RMRG). Numbers in Lambeth Palace Gardens, Inner London, rose from one on Oct. 5th to five on Oct. 19th,

dropping to one by Nov. 17th (GHG). Other records of autumn movement in Inner London came from Bloomsbury, Cripplegate and St. Pancras.

For the first time on record, Wrens bred at Cripplegate; on June 26th and 27th, two birds were "briefly seen carrying food into ruined masonry south of Cripplegate Church and faecal sacs were brought out and dropped." The nest was not discovered and the number of young reared is not known (RBW).

### 302 Fieldfare

November began with wild weather over Britain, the North Sea and Southern Scandinavia and the departure of winter thrushes from W. Europe was dammed. On the 4th, however, the weather cleared slightly and the East Coast of England received the first flocks of Starlings, Blackbirds and other thrushes for several days.

Fieldfares were noted, mainly W., at six localities in the western half of the London Area on Nov. 4th. The numbers involved were not remarkable and in no way prepared observers for the fantastic avalanche of birds that flung themselves across the area on the 5th. With an overcast sky (in contrast to good visibility on the 4th), the birds generally maintained an into-wind heading N.W. though it is clear from records made on or near Box Hill, Surrey, that the North Downs were being used as a leading line by some flocks. The lowest passage rate exceeded a bird a minute over any of the twenty watch points manned and the flood of birds lasted from 07.35 hrs. G.M.T., to late afternoon at least. The heaviest stream in the broadfront movement was over Brent Res., Middx., with *c.* 1,250 birds counted in two hours and the total day's passage of *c.* 90,000 birds, estimated in similar manner to previous quantitative analysis in *L.B.R.*, 24 and 25, eclipsed all previous records of Fieldfare migration except those made on Nov. 1st, 1959. See also *E.B.R.*, 1961: 38. Nov. 6th was a Monday, but the few observations received suggested that passage remained at a high level with *c.* 735 moving N.W. over Girling Res., Essex, in one hour and *c.* 1,500 (untimed) passing S.W. over Sutton, Surrey. About 800 flew S.W. over Sutton on the 7th, but after that date there was a pause until the 11th, when passage resumed north of the Thames at least and once again the flight direction was W. This changed to N.W. on the 12th, when another exceptional movement was obvious throughout the London Area and was watched at twelve places. The volume of passage was about two-thirds of that recorded on Nov. 6th, but a total of 271 birds over Primrose Hill in 70 minutes was the second heaviest on record for Inner London. On both peak dates, Fieldfares were by all accounts the commonest bird migrants in the London Area.

### 303 Song Thrush

Recoveries of juvenile Song Thrushes ringed in the London Area are normally made to the south of the English Channel, in W. France or

Spain. It is therefore of great interest to note that an adult ringed at Elmers End S.F., Kent, on Dec. 18th, 1960 (PM) was recovered at Mont-sur-Marchienne, Hainault, Belgium, on June 3rd, 1961, over 200 miles to the E.S.E.

Mid-October also produced evidence that Song Thrushes do penetrate the London Area from the east under anticyclonic conditions. Between the 12th and 14th, there were increases at Dungeness and Sandwich Bay; on the 14th DJM found them "unusually numerous" at Swanscombe, Kent, and on the same day DIMW saw a few moving W. with Redwings over Regent's Park, Inner London, between 09.00 and 10.30 hrs. B.S.T. Two were seen moving S.W. with other thrushes over Primrose Hill on Oct. 21st, a day when numbers at Rye Meads S.F., Herts., jumped dramatically from ten to over 100 (RMRG) and when a flock of *c.* 50 at Hersham S.F., Surrey, contained "some large greyish birds" (GHG). The trajectory of these birds is open to several interpretations since no large falls were noted at observatories until the next day.

### 304 Redwing

Comparatively few were noted moving with the Fieldfares on Nov. 4th and 5th, but this species was very prominent during the enormous hard-weather movement on Dec. 31st, both in the air and on the ground. The largest number was *c.* 1,000 moving S. over Addington, Surrey (DS).

A full-grown bird ringed at Havering, Essex, on Jan. 14th was at Aurland, Sogn og Fjordane, Norway, on Apr. 27th. Another ringed at Radlett, Herts., on Nov. 12th, 1960, was recovered on Oct. 20th near Bergamo, Italy, showing a remarkable divergence in direction in two consecutive autumn migrations.

### 307 Ring Ousel

S Dulwich Common, a hen on Apr. 12th (IRB). Headley Heath, a cock on Apr. 7th, two cocks and a hen on the 13th (KDE). New Addington, a cock on Oct. 19th (PM). Walton Heath, a cock and a hen on Apr. 7th, a hen on the 13th (KDE).

### 308 Blackbird

A cock at Blackheath, Kent, was singing between 23.15 and 23.50 hrs. G.M.T. on Feb. 26th; the song was slower and more deliberate than that normal in daylight with longer pauses between phrases. The night was mild and fine with no wind; a clear moon was shining and the bird was perched opposite a sodium arc light (DSM).

A peak number of *c.* 150 was recorded at Rye Meads S.F., Herts., on Nov. 5th (RMRG). This record constitutes the only evidence that the broadfront onslaught of this species onto the East Coast at this time penetrated the London Area as did the Fieldfares recorded above (see *E.B.R.*, 1961: 38).

This species produced the most dramatic recovery of the year: a hen ringed at Elmers End, Kent, on Mar. 20th, 1960, was caught at dusk (during the mass migration noted above) on Nov. 5th on a fishing boat *c.* 55 miles E. of Lowestoft, Suffolk.

### 311 Wheatear

March records of eighteen birds from thirteen localities throughout the London Area indicate that the arrival of the species was considerably earlier than usual. The first birds were solitaires at Ruxley G.P., Kent (JCI) and at Brent Res., Middx. (AGV, EHW, *et al.*) on Mar. 12th and on top of Primrose Hill, Inner London, on the 15th (DIMW). No South Coast observatory received any fall of this species before Mar. 12th (cf. *L.B.R.*, 25: 42 and *Bird Migration*, 2 (1): 3). A pair, the cock often in song, frequented Walton S. Res., Surrey, for part of the breeding season but no nest was found (JFC, AQ).

### 317 Stonechat

A good year for this species, with several breeding successes (noted below), winter records from no less than 26 localities and good evidence of a widespread influx and/or passage of at least 50 birds between Oct. 14th and 22nd. Ten at Perry Oaks S.F., Middx., on Oct. 21st (JRH) was the largest group noted.

All summer records are given.

- E\* King George V Res., one pair bred, rearing three young (JCE, JF, BSMs). Walthamstow Res., one pair present during summer but no young seen (JF, RWG).
- H Rye Meads S.F., single birds on July 2nd and 15th (a hen on the latter date); no evidence of breeding (BSMs, RMRG).
- M Brent Res., two immature birds on July 26th (LAB). Perry Oaks S.F., one on Aug. 27th (CAW); no others appeared there until Sept. 27th. Ponders End S.F., members of the family present nearby in Essex were seen up to Oct. 12th (BSMs, FJL).
- K *No summer records.*
- S Chelsham, at Worms Heath, one pair was present all year (PFSC). Esher Common, one pair bred, rearing three young (BEC, JFC, KDE, SG, BAM). Headley Heath, one pair bred (MJC, IBM).

### 318 Whinchat

All summer records are given.

- E\* Brentwood S.F., a juvenile on July 15th (RBW); this may have been an early migrant. Girling Res., one "breeding pair" (BSMs). Rainham Marsh, four pairs found on June 4th, presumed to be breeding (JHB, PJS). Waltham Abbey, a pair on June 17th (JHB).
- H Chorley Wood, one pair with young on July 31st (KMD). Old Parkbury, one pair reared at least one young (MD, EHW). Rye Meads S.F., at least two pairs reported to be breeding (BSMs), but

no evidence of success or continued presence of adults (RMRG).

- M King George VI Res., two pairs bred, one rearing two broods (MC, DGH, DMP, AGV). Winchmore Hill, one pair bred (BSMs).  
 K None seen at Swanscombe or elsewhere.  
 S No records between May 14th and July 24th.

### 320 Redstart

At least 56 cocks were singing on territory in late spring and no less than 51 pairs were located in the London Area, the only county without a definite breeding record being Kent. The number of pairs in Broxbourne Woods, Herts., was 24; this area remains the stronghold of the species, although a minimum of 16 pairs were found between Chingford and Loughton in Epping Forest, Essex (eight in 1959, nine in 1960), and there were five in Richmond Park, Surrey (four in 1960). Due to incomplete coverage of the area, it is not possible to confirm the increase suggested in the above summary, though further support for it is provided by the breeding success of a pair on Hampstead Heath, Middx.; both adults were seen feeding three young on West Heath from July 5th to 8th and the family stayed until mid-August (JDH, EHW *et al.*). See *L.B.R.*, 25: 43.

### 321 Black Redstart

All records are given.

- E\* Girling Res., a hen on Aug. 31st (JCE). Romford S.F., two on Sept. 24th, one on the 29th and 30th (RRS).  
 H Rye Meads S.F., a cock on Apr. 11th and 16th (RMRG).  
 E/M Ponders End, one pair bred for the second year in a timber yard; two young were seen on May 22nd, but none recorded after June 29th (JCE, JF, BSMs, RFS).  
 M Inner London: due to considerable demolition and redevelopment in the City bastion of this species, an accurate summary of records is difficult. It is probable that eight adult cocks returned to the Cripplegate area, but the detailed records of PHFB *et al.* show that no more than five pairs attempted to nest there and that only four broods were seen; probably no more than six young fledged successfully. One pair moved south to Queen Victoria Street in early June, but there too the bulldozers and pile-drivers proved too much for the birds and they left by mid-July. Records of wandering birds from the remaining bombed sites continued until Nov. 14th. As in 1960, single outlying cocks were noted away from the previous concentration, at Tower Hill and at Bloomsbury, but it does appear that the Inner London colony will be unable to adapt to the ecology of new office blocks and geraniums.  
 K Woolwich Arsenal, a cock on Sept. 25th (KB).  
 S Croydon Power Station, one pair bred on the cooling towers (KCO); another probably did so (BRS); these birds were also seen on Beddington S.F. Epsom S.F., a cock on Nov. 24th (KDE). Sanderstead, a hen on July 24th (PFSC).



**322 Nightingale**

Two careful surveys of Broxbourne Woods, Herts., by twg, and the southern part of Epping Forest, Essex, by BSMs produced breeding season counts of over 100 and 29 cocks respectively. The species was recorded in May and June from all counties and in at least fifteen localities other than the two above. In Middlesex, there was a pair in Scratch Wood (GCG, AGV, EHW), and one singing in Park Wood, Ruislip, in late April was the first there for four years (BPP); the only other record was of a cock in Spout Wood on Apr. 23rd (SG, JRP). As stated in *L.B.R.*, 25: 44, there has been clearly no reduction in the population of this species over the last three years.

A bird in song, north of Brasted, Kent, on May 21st (HFG) was at a height of *c.* 700 feet, considerably higher than the altitudinal range previously recorded (see *The Birds of the London Area Since 1900*, p. 255).

**325 Robin**

The best evidence of nocturnal passage for many years was provided by regular counts in the Archbishop's Park, Lambeth, Inner London, where GHG noted an increase from three to eleven overnight on Oct. 18th/19th.

The Robin is one of the few species in which both sexes sing, but it is not known which chose to do so at night in the light of sodium arcs at Epsom, Surrey, on Feb. 15th and 16th (MJC). Another singing at Box Hill, Surrey, on May 12th (GMC) was on top of a very tall territory, a 100 foot lime tree!

**327 Grasshopper Warbler**

The total number *recorded* in the London Area did not exceed 25 birds and unless for some reason, observers did not look for this species in 1961, there would appear to have been a collapse in the breeding population in the last two years. Destruction of suitable habitat occurred at Broxbourne, Herts., and even Surrey could only muster 10 singing birds in the breeding season (23 in 1960).

**333 Reed Warbler**

A total of four exceptionally early birds were noted at Ruxley G.P., and at Swanscombe on Apr. 16th (MJC, FJH, SKR, JGS).

**[334 Marsh Warbler**

E\* Nazeing, one in song between June 23rd and July 7th (BSMs).

H Rye Meads S.F., four breeding pairs and an unmated bird present in June and July (RMRG).

Although the Rye Meads records were originally accepted by the Records Committee, further field observations in 1962 have thrown doubt on the criteria used *nationally* in the identification of this extremely difficult species. For this reason, full acceptance cannot even be considered for any record of the Marsh Warbler unless a full

series of accurate measurements is available or the bird or birds were in *fully* characteristic song. It is hoped that, in conjunction with the Migration Research Officer of the B.T.O. and several other interested (and worried) groups of observers, the problem will be at least better defined in 1963.]

### 337 Sedge Warbler

Three records on Apr. 8th and 9th were unusually early, but the first main arrival was not until Apr. 15th and 16th.

### 343 Blackcap

Inner London: two pairs bred in Holland Park, one pair built a nest in Regent's Park, but were disturbed, and a singing cock was present in Kensington Gardens in June and July (EPB, SC, RFS, DIMW, EHW).

### 346 Garden Warbler

An inconspicuous species and therefore it is interesting to note that at least 20 cock birds were heard in song at Ruislip Wood and Common on May 27th and 28th (EHW).

### 347 Whitethroat

As with several other summer visitors, an early arrival with nine records between Apr. 6th and 9th, including one at Aldgate, Inner London, on the 7th (JGL). Even more unusual was the third record of this species in winter since 1900; one was seen at Ruxley G.P., Kent, on Dec. 10th and 11th (JCI, RWC, FJH).

### 348 Lesser Whitethroat

As in 1960, recorded in at least twenty localities during the breeding season though the observations lack sufficient detail to be summarized. Its place in this report is however secured by the quite exceptional and unique winter record of one at Ruxley G.P., Kent, on Dec. 9th and 10th (JCI, RWC, FJH).

### 339 Melodious Warbler

There is only one previous record of a warbler belonging to the genus *Hippolais* in the London Area and it was impossible on that occasion (see *L.B.R.*, 13: 13) to decide whether the bird seen was an Icterine or a Melodious Warbler. Thirteen years have passed since this record and it is therefore pleasant to note the first definite occurrence of the above species.

E\*/HRye Meads S.F. and Nazeing, one on Aug. 12th and 13th (RMRG).

The dates concerned are early, but an Icterine Warbler was seen at Minsmere, Suffolk, on Aug. 12th while both Skokholm and Portland Bill had Melodious Warblers on that day (*Bird Migration*, 2 (2): 123-128).

**355 Greenish Warbler**

In a year which produced several unusual winter records of warblers, none was more unusual than the presence of this species at Perry Oaks S.F., Middx., from the end of 1960 (the exact arrival date is not known, but its companion Chiffchaffs had come in by Nov. 26th at the latest) to Feb. 26th. The identity of the bird first talked of as "a strange Northern Chiffchaff with a wing-bar" was first questioned by its discoverers, BEC, JFC and AQ, that it was a different species was confirmed by PRC, DIMW and KAW and that it was in fact a Greenish Warbler was confirmed by KW, PADH *et al.* During its stay many other observers "followed" it around the overgrown sewage beds, often seeing at the same time birds as different as Ruff and Bearded Tit. It was altogether a remarkable episode in the history of birds around London and constitutes the first record of wintering in W. Europe, noted with details of the spread of the species from the east in *Identification for Ringers: 2: The Genus Phylloscopus*, p. 38.

**356 Chiffchaff**

Winter records from eleven localities (from six in 1960, five in 1959), the largest number being a party of up to four, often in song, at Perry Oaks S.F., Middx., in January and February. These birds were almost certainly typical *collybita*. Another at Chevening, Kent, on Jan. 1st (per KOS) was singing in the New Year!

The breeding population of Broxbourne Woods, Herts., was estimated to be only a third of what it was in 1959 (TWG).

**357 Wood Warbler**

Breeding season records outside normal passage periods are given.

K Hayes Common, at least one singing from May 28th to June 3rd (AWB). Near Petts Wood, one on July 23rd (JCI, RWC). Sidcup, two on July 21st (JCI).

S Banstead Heath, two pairs present (HB). Esher Common, one singing on June 10th (SG). Limpsfield Chart, two singing on May 20th (AJG) and one in song on the 25th (HEP). Oxshott Heath, three, including two cocks in song, on June 24th (SG) and a pair feeding young in a nest on July 9th (BAM). Wimbledon Common, one on July 2nd (SK).

Spring records of single birds at Osterley Park, Middx., on Apr. 14th (DGH) and at Regent's Park, Inner London, on Apr. 20th (EHW), of two at Walton Heath, Surrey, on Apr. 17th (MJCD) and of six in song on Stanmore Common, Middx., on May 5th (EHW); autumn records totalling six birds between July 30th and Aug. 30th.

**365 Firecrest**

H Rye Meads S.F., one on Oct. 8th (RMRG).

M Inner London: Regent's Park, one on Sept. 1st (the first autumn record in Britain in the year under review) and another on Nov. 26th (DIMW).

S Beddington S.F., one on Dec. 22nd (BRS).

**368 Pied Flycatcher**

S Dulwich Woods and vicinity, a cock on Apr. 11th and a cock and a hen in close association on the 12th (IRB); a pair, possibly the same birds, was present from Apr. 23rd through May; the cock was apparently not seen after June 9th but the hen was seen at intervals up to July 15th and again possibly on Aug. 16th (IRB, JABn, JH). Breeding may have taken place unnoticed but the records suggest that the pair never really settled to a definite territory.

Analysis of the records of this species at Selsey Bill, Beachy Head, Dungeness, Cap Gris Nez, Sandwich Bay and Bradwell from late August to Sept. 20th shows that the "drift" of continental birds to S.E. England was most obvious between Sept. 1st and 4th; on the latter date a total of *c.* 270 birds were counted at five of the above observatories. There is evidence of further small influxes on the 9th and 10th and from the 17th to the 19th (*Bird Migration*, 2 (2): 86). In the London Area, no less than 28 migrant Pied Flycatchers were seen between Aug. 30th and Sept. 21st. The number is not remarkable but the pattern of occurrence is since it reflects the coastal falls. The arrivals of nine birds (one in three of the 28!) in Regent's Park, Inner London, fell in three distinct periods, which were Sept. 4th to 8th, 12th to 14th and the 18th and 19th. These indicate a further "drift" inland subsequent to the first and second coastal influxes and a simultaneous arrival with the third. The other records, from mainly random observations unfortunately, show a widespread influx between Sept. 5th and 8th but no pattern is evident afterwards.

**371 Hedge Sparrow**

The eruptive dispersal of Dunnocks in 1961, which was noted throughout E. England, has been described in detail in *Bird Migration*, 2 (2) and certain important London records are given there on pp. 112-113. In the London Area, the movement continued into November with a heavy influx in the first week. At Rye Meads S.F., Herts., numbers soared from *c.* 10 on Nov. 4th to *c.* 100 on the 5th (RMRG), an unprecedented arrival matched by increases at the same time at Lambeth, Inner London, and Hersham S.F., Surrey (GHG). In addition the species was apparently sensitive to the heavy snowfall imminent at the year end; an influx of *c.* 60 at Brent Res., Middx., on Dec. 28th (LAB) contained two albinistic birds.

**379 Rock and Water Pipit**

Records of races other than *Petrosus* are given.

- H Hilfield Park Res., one having some of the characters of *spinoletta* on Nov. 18th (LAB).
- M Brent Res., one, either *spinoletta* or *littoralis*, on Apr. 22nd (LAB, DT, wjw).
- S Walton S. Res., two, either *spinoletta* or *littoralis*, on Mar. 26th (KDE, SKR, MJC).

**381 Grey Wagtail**

At least sixteen pairs were noted during the summer, even though metropolitan Surrey was apparently less searched than usual, and an increase in the breeding population now seems likely. The pair which nested in a brewery in Whitechapel Road, Inner London, in 1960 reared two broods there in the year under review.

**382 Yellow Wagtail**

A full account of the stay of a cock *flavissima* at Beddington S.F., Surrey, from Nov. 27th, 1960, to Mar. 26th is given in *B.B.*, 54: 208.

There were only five records of cock *flava*, while of eight variants seen, one, a paired cock at Hersham S.F., Surrey, resembled *leucocephala* (sg, PJO, DP) and another, a paired hen, was identical to the grey "mutants" first described by Stuart Smith in *The Yellow Wagtail*, p. 103.

**383 Waxwing**

- E\* Orsett, one on Dec. 25th (JTRS).
- K Green St. Green, one on Dec. 24th (BE). Otford, one on Dec. 10th (BE).
- S Beddington S.F. and Mitcham Common, two on Nov. 10th (PJW, per JABN). Fitzjames Avenue, Croydon, one found dead on Nov. 22nd (AEH, per PRC). Lower Kingswood, "about eight to ten" on Nov. 5th, one on the 9th (DM).

**384 Great Grey Shrike**

- E\* Fisher's Green G.P., one from Jan. 29th to Mar. 26th (JCE).
- M Mill Hill, one on Dec. 3rd (EHV).
- S Leatherhead, one on Feb. 5th (TB).

**388 Red-backed Shrike**

Breeding season records only are given.

- E\* Brentwood, one pair present between June 7th and Aug. 15th (RGHC, MSJS, per *E.B.R.*, 1961). Epping Forest, two pairs bred (BSMs, FR).
- H Chorleywood Common, one pair with four young on June 22nd (LLE). Great Amwell, a cock on June 18th (LLE).
- M Graye Park, one pair bred (BSMs).
- K Chislehurst, one pair bred, rearing two young (JCI, RWC, FJH). Northfleet, one pair bred successfully (CAT, per FJH). Ruxley G.P., one pair bred, rearing three young (JCI, JMC, FJH, AW). Stone, one pair bred successfully (CAT, per KOS).
- S Ashtead Common, one pair in summer with three young on July 6th (MJC). Banstead, one pair bred rearing two young (KDE). Berrylands and Elmbridge, a pair seen in this area did not breed, though the species had nested in the previous *four* years (sg, JRP). Brooklands, a hen feeding young on July 20th (LH). Coulsdon, one pair

bred and another cock was present (GCG, RPC). Leatherhead, at least seven pairs in an area, where eggs were laid in at least nine nests, but some were deserted or destroyed later; seven broods were eventually reared (TB, GMC, Mcd). Tadworth, a hen or immature on July 9th (ROB, per HB). Thames Ditton Common, one pair bred, rearing two young (PJO).

### 390 Rose-coloured Starling

M Sunbury-on-Thames, one first seen in a garden on Aug. 9th was found again on the 11th and 12th (js). The description submitted is clearly of this species; the question remains as to how it came. To dismiss the bird as an escape is simple, but on Aug. 8th there was a violent gale from the S.S.W., (species such as Lapwing were found "wrecked" in Inner London on that day) and the description of the bird's behaviour shows that while it was first easily attracted to food, it had become "much more restless" by the 12th, the last day on which it was seen. Of the records summarized in the *Handbook*, "over 60%" were dated "between June and August" and the latter month has remained *the* month for this *vagrant*.

### 391 Hawfinch

Spring and breeding season records for 1959, 1960 and the year under review have been summarized. It is clear that hawfinches are still widespread at these seasons in suitable habitat. In at least one year, pairs or small parties of this secretive species have been seen in six localities in Essex, two in Hertfordshire, twelve in Middlesex, five in Kent, ten in Surrey and one in Inner London. There is no indication that they are being adversely affected by the continuing urbanization of the London Area or toxic chemicals.

### 393 Goldfinch

After an abundantly successful breeding season, flocks of adults and immatures roamed the London Area. Flocks of 200 and over were noted in three counties.

H Rye Meads S.F., peak numbers of *c.* 450 on Aug. 5th and *c.* 500 on Sept. 24th; a first winter bird ringed there on Sept. 9th was recovered at Cavignac, Gironde, France, on Nov. 12th (RMRG).

K Northfleet, *c.* 300 from June 20th to 30th (per KOS).

S Addington, *c.* 250 in August and September; a juvenile from this flock ringed on Aug. 23rd by DS, was captured near Villamanta, Madrid, Spain, on Dec. 1st. Hershams S.F., *c.* 400 on Oct. 7th (GHG). Sanderstead, two flocks of *c.* 200 in late September (PFSC).

Even in Inner London, there were many more than usual in autumn, with *c.* 70 in Holland Park on Oct. 11th (EPB). Diurnal passage over Primrose Hill continued into November, following a record movement of 41 flying S.W. on Oct. 21st (DIMW). This flight direction and that of S.S.W. observed for 27 flying over East Molesey,

Surrey, on Oct. 28th (PJO) would have taken the birds concerned to the area of the two recoveries also noted above (see also *Bird Migration*, 1 (4): 177).

### 394 Siskin

The paucity of records early in 1961 reflected the year-end position in 1960 (cf. *L.B.R.*, 25: 49) but by the end of February and through March, the total population appears to have increased; two nearby flocks of 59 and 35 at Addlestone, Surrey, on Feb. 19th (GHG) comprise the biggest winter concentration for at least three years. By late December, there were *c.* 155 at six localities in Surrey but elsewhere apparently none.

### 396 Twite

H Rye Meads S.F., two on Oct. 21st (RMRG).

### 397 Redpoll

Breeding season records are given in full.

E\* Epping Forest, one at High Beech on May 29th (BSMs).

H Broxbourne Woods, at least two pairs bred (TWG).

M Whitewebbs Park, three on July 14th (BSMs).

K Petts Wood, at least two pairs present; the young from a nest found on June 4th flew on the 8th (JMC).

S Banstead and Walton Heaths, 19 pairs present and two nests found (HB, EJC, MJCD, WRI). Burgh Heath, two pairs present (HB). Esher Common, up to three seen in June and July (BEC, SG, PJO, AQ). Headley Heath, eight pairs present (HB). Littleworth Common, two or three pairs present (EJC, WRI). Ockham Common, one pair present (BEC). Oxshott Heath, a cock on June 24th (SG). Tadworth, three pairs present (HB).

HB is to be congratulated on finding more Redpolls than for many years; his concentration on this species shows how much can be done by a single-minded observer working on breeding distribution. His counts do not necessarily indicate an increase even though only three pairs were recorded in Surrey in 1959.

A bird of the race *flammea* was seen at Leatherhead, Surrey, on Feb. 5th (TB, MJC) and three others of this form were at Hilfield Park Res., Herts., on Oct. 21st (BLS).

### 401 Bullfinch

Unprotected, this species is nevertheless becoming increasingly common and widespread, particularly in Surrey; in the year under review, the numbers in November and December drew many comments. That an irruptive movement did take place is proved by the first records of birds in Lambeth and their reappearance in Holland Park, Inner London, in October, a journey of 35 miles to the W.S.W. undertaken by a juvenile male ringed at Cliffe, Kent, on Sept. 2nd and recovered at Chessington, Surrey, on Nov. 21st and,

more dramatically, diurnal passages of sixteen birds in total over Primrose Hill, Inner London, on Oct, 21st (nine S.W.), 23rd (one S.W.), 26th (three W.), Nov. 1st (two W.N.W.) and 9th (one N.).

#### 404 **Crossbill**

S Walton Heath, three on Apr. 4th and four on the 7th, one cock on each date (KDE).

#### 407 **Chaffinch**

GB notes that, on Bookham Common, this species has decreased in the last ten years by *c.* 60% in oakwood areas and by *c.* 30% in open scrub and grasslands.

#### 409 **Yellowhammer**

At least one pair nested on Hampstead Heath, Middx., for the third year running and only one reference to a population decrease (at Walton, Surrey) was received in 1961 (cf. *E.B.R.*, 1961: 46).

#### 415 **Cirl Bunting**

E\* Potter Street, near Harlow, a cock on Apr. 5th (PMWR, per *E.B.R.*, 1961).

S Godstone, near Leigh Mill, a cock in song on June 10th and 14th (ADB).

#### 421 **Reed Bunting**

Following the comment made on the species' changing distribution, in *L.B.R.*, 25: 53, it is interesting to note that the breeding population of Bookham Common, Surrey, has doubled in the last ten years (GB). Of spring passage records, the most dramatic was of *c.* 250 at Rye Meads S.F., Herts., on Mar. 19th; 90% of the birds were cocks (RMRG).

#### 423 **Snow Bunting**

H Hilfield Park Res., a hen on Oct. 8th and 15th (BLS, EHW). Rye Meads S.F., one on Nov. 5th (RMRG).

M Finsbury Park, three, one a cock, flying E. on Dec. 5th (DIMW). Perry Oaks S.F., a cock on Nov. 19th (BEC). Queen Mary Res., adult cocks on Nov. 2nd and Dec. 2nd (BEC, BF, SG, DMP). Staines Res., a cock, possibly the same as that at Perry Oaks S.F., flying N. on Nov. 19th (DGH, DMP).

S Barn Elms Res., a hen or immature on Oct. 28th and Nov. 1st (BMA, EF, RWG). Walton S. Res., one on Mar. 5th (GHG) and a hen or immature on Dec. 16th and 17th (BEC, JFC, AQ).



## Corrections to the London Bird Report, 1960

### Errata

- Page 3* Line 13. Should read "adding another fourteen species . . ." since 2 species (Roller and Great Snipe) were added in 1959, not one as set out in the table.
- Page 10* 2nd paragraph first line, 1959 should read 1960.
- Page 14* Garganey. Walthamstow Res., May 18th should read Apr. 18th (RFS).
- Page 17* First line. Cheshunt G.P. record should be included under Herts., not Essex.
- Page 34* Kittiwake. For Selshurst read Selhurst.
- Page 44* Black Redstart. Holmethorpe and Mersham records refer to the same bird; delete Mersham record.
- Page 48* 389 Starling. For Dukhovishihina (!) read Dynobunyuria (!!)
- and for May 5th read Oct. 5th.  
Clock Tower, St. Pancras Hotel, this roost has been in use at least since 1941 (sc).
- Page 73* Table 5. Surrey—Mean no. of burrows should read 148.  
No. of colonies counted should read 6.

## Additions to London Bird Reports for previous years

### 9 Little Grebe

K Northfleet, 74 on Jan. 16th, 1960 (RJF).

### 29 Shag

S Barn Elms Res., an immature reported on Jan. 3rd, 1960, was found dead on Jan. 10th (PRC, EJC, WRI).

### 52 Pintail

M Staines Res., three pairs on Jan. 11th, 1960 (DS).

### 55 Scaup

M Staines Res., a duck on Jan. 11th, 1960 (DS).

### 56 Tufted Duck

S Richmond Park, three small ducklings seen on Aug. 7th, 1960, had disappeared a week later (VFH).

### 94 Goshawk

S Woldingham, two on Aug. 8th and 9th, 1959 (GM) (*Surrey Bird Report*, 1959).

**105 Peregrine**

S Kew, one seen in flight on Feb. 4th, 1960 (H).

**184 Ruff**

S Molesey S.F., one on Mar. 7th, 1960 (*Surrey Bird Report*, 1960).

**202 Glaucous Gull**

S Barn Elms Res., one on Apr. 20th, 1960 (NHP).

**295 Bearded Tit**

K Northfleet, a cock on Dec. 13th, 1959 (RJF, EHG, REI *et al.*). The first record for the London Area.

Northfleet, in 1960 a cock in January and February and two trapped and ringed on Oct. 27th (CAWR, see also *Kent Bird Report*, 9: 33).

**307 Ring Ouzel**

S Walton Heath, one from Sept. 29th to Oct. 4th, 1960 (HB).

**324 Bluethroat**

K Northfleet, an adult cock of the red-spotted form trapped and ringed on Sept. 22nd, 1960 (SB, REI).

**352 Nightjar**

S Limpsfield Chart, three churring on June 11th, 1960 (DS).

### Contributors to the Systematic List

(Continued from p. 9)

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## **The Bird Life of Holland Park**

### **The Effect of Human Interference**

By E. P. BROWN

#### **Summary**

- (1) The recent history of Holland Park is outlined, this being divided into three periods (a) 1920/39 when the Park was in private occupation; (b) during the 1939/45 war when the grounds were untended; and (c) since 1952 when the Park under the L.C.C. was opened to the public.
- (2) A survey is made of the ecology of the Park, the principal habitats being described.
- (3) Comparative tables are given of breeding species and species observed during the past forty years, and a table of counts carried out in 1952, 1958, 1959, 1960 and 1961.
- (4) These tables are examined and the status and habits of the various species are discussed. It is shown that the Green Woodpecker and the Sparrowhawk became breeding species as a result of the conditions that arose during the war-time period but did not breed subsequently and that such species as the House Sparrow and Feral Pigeon, present only in very small numbers in 1952, increased. The importance of the woodland character of much of the Park is emphasised and its value as a sanctuary for some of the species more unusual in the London area.
- (5) The conclusion is drawn that birds are little affected by human beings around them if they are left alone and that while the greatest danger to the bird life in the Park lies in the effects of cultivation and building on the habitat and food supply, judicious cultivation might have a beneficial effect. The birds in many direct ways are well looked after. Changes in the status of species and in habits attributable to human interference are listed.

#### **Introduction**

Holland Park was taken over by the L.C.C. in 1952; before that it was the private property of the late Lord Ilchester. Up to 1939 the Jacobean house had been occupied and the grounds cared for but between 1939 and 1951 the house was empty; it was damaged by German incendiary bombs, the grounds were untended and a barrage balloon and its crew were there for some of the time. In 1952 the L.C.C. opened the northern part of the Park to the public and subsequently the remainder.

It is this history of the Park during the past twenty or thirty years which makes it so interesting an area for a bird study. Unfortunately, however,

reliable records for the period prior to 1951 are scanty. It was difficult to obtain access to the Park before 1939 but Eric Simms managed to visit it a number of times between 1936 and 1939 and A. Holte Macpherson published a number of records in papers in *British Birds* between 1929 and 1939. No records are available for the 1939-1951 period but a census was taken by Stanley Cramp and W. G. Teagle in May, 1952. Subsequently the official observers for the Park, Stanley Cramp from 1952 to 1956 and myself have kept fuller records, except between 1955 and 1957 when visits were on a much reduced scale. Since 1958 I have visited the Park at least once a week during the autumn and winter and three or four times a week during the breeding season. Most of the visits were in the early morning but occasionally evening visits were made and frequently a half day or even a whole day was spent in the Park. In addition counts were carried out at least once a month. Furthermore, many observations were made by Keeper R. Barker and other members of the Park staff.

### **The Park**

The accompanying map (Fig. 1) shows the Park as it is now. Comprising an area of 54 acres, it lies mainly on the southern slopes of the hill known as Campden Hill in Kensington and includes the western end of the ridge which slopes down towards low-lying land in the Thames valley. The highest point in the Park, on the eastern side about 250 yards north of the hostel, is 110 feet above sea level, while the lowest, the southern boundary of the Park, is only 35 feet above sea level, the western boundary is about 40 feet above sea level. Springs rose on the upper slopes of the hill and one of them provided water for a small pond. This, however, has been showing signs of drying up recently and is now to have a piped supply. There has been a tendency since the building of the comprehensive school (see below) for the water to run down the north side of the hill rather than the south side as heretofore. Some of the ruins of the old house still remain but the east wing has been rebuilt and a new building added on the east side forming three sides of a square within which is a lawn and a moat. This building was opened as an international youth hostel in 1959.

Having been in private occupation for over 300 years the grounds have been laid out and cultivated and contain a diversity of plants and trees, many of them not indigenous. The grounds have been considerably reduced in size over the years by the sale of land for building purposes and the increased building up of the surrounding area cannot be ignored when the ornithology of the Park is being considered. Before the war the houses on Campden Hill immediately contiguous to Holland Park on the east were big houses standing in their own large well tree'd grounds, while to the west the houses were detached with considerable gardens. Bombing during the 1939/45 war destroyed many of these large houses, their grounds like those of the Park itself running wild for some years. These wild areas were only built up in 1958 and 1959, including the erection of a large comprehensive school on Campden Hill, whose pupils go through the Park in considerable numbers both morning and evening. The possible

effect of this development on the bird life of the Park cannot yet be measured. There still remain several secluded gardens on Campden Hill but these buildings have, nevertheless, constricted the area available to birds and such a barrier of bricks and mortar may also tend to make such birds as Jays and Tawny Owls move about more freely between Holland Park and the neighbouring squares and gardens than between Holland Park and Kensington Gardens. For instance, although there was only one Tawny Owl record for Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens in 1959 and 1960, these birds were seen and heard on a number of occasions in gardens and squares north of Holland Park, and Jays, which are thought to be decreasing in these two Royal Parks are relatively common in these gardens and squares. There are, of course, other factors, such as food supply in this connexion.

Another danger to the bird life of Holland Park resulting from this building is a possible increase in the number of cats frequenting the Park. Hitherto the Park has been relatively free of this problem but there has been some increase recently.

A further constriction is now taking place in the erection of the new Commonwealth Institute building on the site at the south side of the Park fronting on Kensington High Street. This site was formerly a wooded area containing a number of tall trees and thick undergrowth, the breeding place of a pair of Carrion Crows, a roost for Wood Pigeons in the winter, and almost certainly a number of other smaller birds bred there.

The Park is open to the public all the year round from 7 a.m. to dusk and a lot of children visit it. There is a children's playground at the edge of the woods on the west side. The Park staff are endeavouring to educate the children to watch the wild life rather than to destroy it. Attempts have been made to introduce Pheasants, both Malayan and English, Peafowl and Chinese Geese. The Peafowl and Chinese Geese have thriven and multiplied but the ground feeding habits of the latter may be detrimental both to the vegetation and flowers and to the smaller ground nesting birds.

By comparison the grounds before the war were very secluded. Eric Simms describes them as follows:

“The northern part of Holland House grounds was in 1936-39 almost virgin woodland—undisturbed and secluded, fool's parsley, bluebells grew in great profusion and the dawn choruses in summer were of great power and variety. Nearly all my interesting observations were made in this part. The immediate environs of the House were in good order—the roses a picture each year and the lawns in fine trim”.

By 1952, however, the southern half of the grounds could be described as a rough field, and the northern wooded half was densely covered, with a fair amount of bramble but much of the shrub layer formed of young sycamore. There was also a good deal of old dead timber. Under the L.C.C. much of the young sycamore was removed and a good deal of re-planting of a variety of plants has taken place. The growth of these may well have a bearing on the unusual variety of birds that has appeared in the Park recently.

## Main Habitats

From the point of view of types of habitat for birds, the grounds can now be divided roughly into four zones (see map Fig. 1).

*Zone 1.* On the northern side of the Park is a well wooded area, in the main deciduous trees such as Oak, Poplar, Chestnut, Elm, Sycamore but with some conifers and a few fruit trees, such as Pears and Medlars. A few elms of considerable antiquity remain but a majority of the trees appear to have been planted in the 19th century. There are, therefore, sufficient trees old enough to provide suitable conditions for woodpeckers and owls. The canopy is quite thick in summer. The shrub layer is mainly saplings of trees and low holly bushes, with some bramble. The natural herb layer shows a lot of Cow Parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) and Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) in the spring together with grass and Ivy, and later in the year some Enchanter's Nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*) can be found, but a good deal of planting of daffodils, ferns, fritillaries and other suitable plants has taken place. There is virtually no lichen and up to 1960 there was little moss but there has always been a good deal of fungi. In 1960, however, partly because of encouragement by the Park staff there was a marked increase in the amount of moss in the woods. This wooded area, known as "The Wilderness" in old maps, was considerably extended in the last century.

In addition to the small natural pond already referred to there is at the foot of the western slope an open ditch. On the north side this area is fringed by the houses and gardens of Holland Park. The L.C.C. have laid the woods out in a series of fenced off enclosures to which the public do not have access, with public footpaths between. While almost all the species of birds range throughout the Park it is in this zone that the majority of the bird population is to be found. It is also the zone least frequented by the public.

*Zone 2.* The second zone might be termed the cultivated zone. It comprises the environs of the house with its lawns and hostel moat, the formal laid out gardens including a goldfish pond and fountain, the playing field with its fringe of big trees, and the former garden ballroom, now the cafeteria. Here the principal breeding species are the House Sparrow and the Feral Pigeon. The playing field and the lawns provide a feeding place for Wood and Feral Pigeons, Blackbirds, Thrushes, Carrion Crows and flocks of Starlings, and the lawns and the hostel moat attract Wagtails, the Pied throughout the year and the Grey in the autumn. This zone is the one chiefly frequented by the public. On a fine summer weekend there may be a thousand or so people on the lawns and round the playing field. There are also two small laid out entrance gardens, one in the north-east corner of the Park and one in the north-west corner.

*Zone 3.* Between the wood and the cultivated area is a zone that is more open and cultivated than the woodland but, being enclosed, not so public nor so formally laid out as the area round the house. Its plants include Birch and Hawthorn, evergreens, such as Rhododendron and Holly and a number of more exotic plants such as clumps of Bamboo and Magnolia trees forming what was once a rockery and Japanese garden. There

is more grass which grows to hay height. In one of the enclosures in this area are three water tanks. The warblers favour this zone, the long grass and the water providing them with nesting sites and food. The Chiffchaff appears also in the woods and may have bred on their edge in 1958 but the Willow Warbler appears always to have bred in this zone. The Blackcap frequented this area in 1958 and 1961, although in 1960 the undergrowth of the clearings in the woods was preferred.

*Zone 4.* The fourth zone comprises the ruins of the house and the waste land immediately surrounding them and the nursery which lies to the west of the cafeteria and includes a considerable piece of waste land with a few trees on it and a herb layer of such plants as Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*), Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Thistle (*Cirsium*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), Sorrel (*Rumex*), Campion (*Melandrium dioicum*), and grass. This waste land is fairly low-lying as, in the late summer of 1959, dry though it was, a *Juncus* was flourishing. The flora round the house ruins includes Ragwort, Rosebay Willowherb, Chenopodium and so forth. Flocks of sparrows and a few finches are to be found in these areas and in 1960 the nettles attracted whitethroats.

### Food Spectrum

The profusion and variety of trees and plants throughout the Park not only provides a variety of habitat but also a variety of food for birds not usual in a London park. Acorns, Chestnuts, Beechmast, Hazel nuts and Walnuts, Pine cones, Pears, Mulberries, Hawthorn berries, Hips and indeed berries of many other kinds are abundant. Furthermore, there are many insects and other invertebrates both on the trees and plants and on and in the ground below. Aphids abound. There are a few of the commoner species of butterflies and moths, and a few dragonflies (*Odonata*) used to be seen in the late summer but the drought of 1959 seems to have affected them as none has been seen since. Hover flies are plentiful and there are usually several wasps nests.

### Mammal Population

There are not many small mammals. Bones of the Field Mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) have twice been found in Tawny Owl pellets and there has been an occasional Brown Rat but in the main the owls seem to feed on small birds. There were Hedgehogs up to and including 1958 but in 1959 none was seen though a dead one was found. Whether the dry summer or the building up of the surrounding area was the cause of this it is impossible to say. Single Grey Squirrels are seen from time to time but they do not stay or breed and cannot, therefore, be regarded as a breeding season predator. Bats can be seen at dusk.\*

Frogs spawn in the pond on the edge of the woods and newts also appear in the ponds.

\*In March, 1962 a dead bat found in the Park was identified as a male Pipistrelle.

### The Bird Population

Table 1 gives a list of species known to have bred or believed to have bred between 1920 and 1961; the paucity of the records for the years 1920-1952, and to a lesser extent 1955-57, referred to earlier should, however, be borne in mind. This table shows a decline in the number of breeding species between 1952 and 1957 as compared with the pre-war figures, followed by a steady rise beginning in 1958. What is noticeable is the absence both of the warblers and of the more urban birds such as the Starling and the House Sparrow from the immediate post-war breeding list and from this it would appear that the extensive clearing out and other work which the L.C.C. were obliged to carry out in 1952 disturbed in particular the warbler population while the urban birds were still absent.

TABLE 1

<i>Name of Species</i>	1920- 1936	1936- 1939	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956*	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	
Mallard	-	b	O	B	b	B	b	B	B	B	B	B	
Sparrow Hawk	-		O	B	O								
Stock Dove	-	B	b	O	O	O		b	O	O	O		
Wood Pigeon	-	B	B	O	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Feral Pigeon	-		b	b	b	b	b	b	b	B	B	B	
Tawny Owl	-	B	B	O	B	O	O	O	O	O	B	B	
Green Woodpecker	-	O		B	B	b			O	O			
Great Spotted Woodpecker	-	B	B	b	b	B	b	b	b	O	O	B	B
Carrion Crow	-		O	O	O	O	O	b	O	B	B	O	
Jay	-	b	B	B	b	B	b	b	b	B	B	B	
Great Tit	-	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Blue Tit	-	b	B	O	b	B	B	b	B	B	B	B	
Coal Tit	-			O	O		O	O	B	B	B	O	
Marsh Tit	-		B		O								
Nuthatch	-							O	B	B	B	B	
Wren	-	b	B	B	B	b	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Mistle Thrush	-	B	B		B	b	B	O	O	O	B	B	
Song Thrush	-	b	B	B	B	B	b	B	B	B	B	B	
Blackbird	-	b	B	B	B	B	b	B	B	B	B	B	
Robin	-	b	B	B	B	B	b	B	B	B	B	B	
Blackcap	-	B		O	O	O			O		B	B	
Whitethroat	-								O		b	O	
Willow Warbler	-	B	O	O	B	O	O		B	B	b	O	
Chiffchaff	-	O	B	O	O			O	b	O	O	O	
Spotted Flycatcher	-	B	B			O		O	O	B	B	B	
Hedge Sparrow	-	b	B	O	b	B	b	b	O	b	B	B	
Pied Wagtail	-								O	O	O	B	
Starling	-		B	O	O	b	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Greenfinch	-	B	O	O			O	O	O	B	B	B	
Goldfinch	-	O						O			O	B	
Chaffinch	-	B	O	B	O	O	O	O	b	b	B	B	
House Sparrow	-		B	O	O	O	O	B	B	B	B	B	
Total	-	19	18	10	17	15	14	15	18	20	25	23	

B = bred

b = probably bred

O = observed

\*only two visits paid during breeding season by observer.

(With acknowledgment to the *Reports on Bird Sanctuaries in the Royal Parks.*)



TABLE 2

Name of Species	1920- 1936	1936- 1939	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961
Heron	-							○	○	○	○	○
Mute Swan	-										○	○
Peregrine Falcon	-	○										
Kestrel	-	○					○	○		○	○	○
Lapwing	-										○	○
Woodcock	-				○						○	
Black Headed Gull	-											○
Cuckoo	-	○		○			○				○	○
Swift	-		○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	-			○	○					○	○	○
Skylark	-			○								
Swallow/Martin	-								○	○	○	○
Jackdaw	-			○							○	○
Long Tailed Tit	-								○	○	○	○
Treecreeper	-			○			○	○	○	○	○	○
Redwing	-				○						○	○
Redstart	-	○									○	○
Garden Warbler	-	○	○								○	○
Gold Crest	-									○	○	○
Pied Flycatcher	-										○	○
Grey Wagtail	-									○	○	○
Hawfinch	-										○	
Redpoll	-			○								○
Bullfinch	-									○	○	○
Brambling	-						○			○		

A. Holte Macpherson also recorded a Turtledove and a Lesser Whitethroat each once during 1920/1936. A dead Rook was found in January, 1960, and a dead Kingfisher in December, 1961. Long Tailed Tits were also recorded in 1950. (With acknowledgment to the *Reports on Bird Sanctuaries in the Royal Parks.*)

Holland Park is now within a smokeless zone which must provide better conditions for plants and animals of all kinds. Since, however, it only came into operation on 1st October, 1959, it cannot be regarded as more than a contributory factor in the breeding list rise and it is early yet to assess its possible effects.

The list of species observed given in Table 2 also shows a considerable increase latterly although here the more intensive observation is a much more significant factor.

However, if these two tables are taken in conjunction with Table 3 in which the census figure of May, 1952 is compared with comparable figures for the years 1958/61 the overall increase in the bird population of the Park becomes all the more apparent, particularly in the more urban type of birds. It is necessary to bear in mind when considering this latter table that these figures do not represent a census of the breeding population but are counts carried out regularly over a specific route designed to cover all the principal habitats. For space reasons it is not possible to include the full monthly figures for the four years.

## Breeding Species

### (a) *Gains and Losses*

Of the fourteen true birds of the garden association (Fitter, *London's Natural History*) only the House Martin is absent, being seen only on odd occasions, and only the Swift does not breed, though it is frequently seen flying over the Park between May and August and breeds in the roofs of houses in Oxford Gardens (off Ladbroke Grove) to the north of the Park, about a mile away.

The remaining twelve, which can be regarded as those species which have most successfully adapted themselves to living in close proximity to man, are the Starling, Greenfinch, Chaffinch, House Sparrow, Great and Blue Tits, Mistle and Song Thrushes, Blackbird, Robin, Hedge Sparrow and Wren and of these the Starling, Greenfinch, Chaffinch, House Sparrow and Mistle Thrush cannot be regarded as regular breeding birds throughout the whole forty year period. On the other hand several species not included in the garden association have bred regularly: these are the Mallard, Wood Pigeon, Jay and Great Spotted Woodpecker, the latter it seems probable has always attempted to breed though not by any means always successfully.

Cramp and Teagle (*British Birds*, Vol. XLV, pp. 433-456) refer to the grounds of Holland House "whose superb woodland has for long served as a vital sanctuary in the heart of the central zone and acted as a base from which species such as the Jay, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Stock Dove have been able to spread into less favoured parts" and it is in this woodland character of the grounds that an explanation of the bird life appears to lie.

That the Park can still be colonized is shown by the Nuthatch. Before 1957 this species had only been recorded some half a dozen times this century in inner London, two of these records, however, being in the Holland Park area. During the tit irruption in the autumn of that year the Nuthatch was recorded several times in Holland Park and a pair stayed to breed in 1958. As a pair of Nuthatches also bred successfully in Kensington Gardens in 1958 and the same hole was used for successful breeding in 1959 and 1960 it seems unlikely that any spread outwards from Holland Park has taken place.

In Holland Park in 1958 the pair bred successfully in a hole in a tree on the edge of one of the paths and in 1959 they again bred successfully, though in a different hole as they were ousted by Starlings from the 1958 hole where they attempted to breed again. In 1960 and 1961, however, two pairs bred. There is no doubt that the Park staff, who have provided the Nuthatches with some food during the winter, have assisted them in establishing themselves and they also visit bird tables in nearby gardens. The food factor may control the number of Nuthatches in the Park as they seem better able to hold their own with the starlings as far as nest sites are concerned than do the woodpeckers.\*

\*In the spring of 1962 there were only three Nuthatches in Holland Park, a mated pair and an unmated bird. At this time a Nuthatch was reported from Ladbroke Square and Campden Hill. One pair bred successfully in 1962 but there is evidence of fighting probably resulting in a change of mates.

An interesting observation is that while the Nuthatches' considerable vocal repertoire has been much in evidence the trill song was not heard until 1960 when for the first time there were two pairs holding territory in the Park. Furthermore it was not heard during the incubation and fledging periods but began again after the young birds had left the nest.

Another new colonist is the Coal Tit, a marginal species in the inner London area. None was recorded by Eric Simms between 1936 and 1939 but one was observed during the 1952 census in May and it was observed in most years subsequently up to 1958 and 1959 when a pair bred successfully. In both years the nest was in a hole in a tree higher than is usual for Coal Tits; young birds were subsequently seen in both years. A bird was found dead in the spring of 1960 but there were two birds in the Park throughout the 1960 breeding season and although no nest was found a young bird was seen. In 1961, however, these birds disappeared during the breeding season reappearing in July, several birds being present throughout the autumn. A lack of evergreens and conifers in the surrounding area may, of course, preclude any marked spread of this species.\*

These two gains have both occurred since the Park was opened to the public whereas the position is reversed in the cases of the Green Woodpecker and the Sparrow Hawk. A Green Woodpecker was observed in the grounds in January, 1930 and noted there for about three months, appearing to be a solitary bird (A. Holte Macpherson). Eric Simms did not record one between 1936 and 1939 but when the May, 1952 census was taken one was present and breeding was subsequently proved both in 1952 and 1953 and was presumed in 1954. It has, however, never bred since and although there were isolated observations in the spring of 1958 and 1959 it can be regarded as a lost species. It appears, therefore, that this species succeeded in establishing itself when the woodland was overgrown and undisturbed and that human interference has had an adverse effect. This species is sufficiently adaptable to be relatively common in Hampton Court and Bushey Park, where it breeds, so it would appear to be rather the contraction and cultivation of the area than the actual presence of the public which has caused its disappearance. This may have affected both its nest sites and food and perhaps especially the ants of which it is so fond.

The other loss is the Sparrow Hawk. This species again appeared to be establishing itself while the woodland was wild and overgrown, having been observed in 1952 and 1954 and having attempted to breed in 1953, but it has not been recorded subsequently, although there are unconfirmed reports of one having been seen occasionally in the Park in the autumn and winter of 1959/60.

(b) *Garden Association Birds*

Returning to the garden association birds, the Greenfinch is a bird of erratic movements, especially during the winter, and too much importance cannot, therefore, be attached to its absence from the records from time to time. Eric Simms, however, recorded two or three pairs between 1936

\*A pair bred successfully in 1962.

and 1939 and there are no records for 1953-55, so there was evidently a falling off in numbers immediately after the Park was cleaned up and opened to the public. However, there are breeding records for 1959-1961 and there were two or three pairs in 1960 and 1961 so it has undoubtedly regained its former numbers. It frequents mainly zones 3 and 4, its known nests being in zone 4 and it can be seen feeding on the grass, on thistles and other weeds in the nursery and round the hostel, on buddleia (*buddleja davidi*), hawthorn, dog rose and plane tree seeds. This is a species which might well be affected by the cutting down of weeds.

The Chaffinch has also shown an increase in 1960/61, there having been three or four pairs in both breeding seasons and there was a small flock of about 20 birds in the woods during January, 1961. However, there has usually been a seasonal increase in the autumn and winter, though not of this magnitude, and since this species collects in nomadic flocks at this season these latter figures may be more related to external circumstances than to local conditions. The breeding season figures are, therefore, a better indication of the status of the species in the area. Eric Simms records the Chaffinch as present in the Park in small numbers between 1936 and 1939 and there is no evidence of more than one or two pairs between 1952 and 1959, nor is there any evidence of an increase during the war-time period. According to *Birds of the London Area Since 1900* this species is "probably the most common and widespread of all the birds in the London area" but even now there are few in Holland Park compared with the Robin or even the Blue and Great Tits. The Chaffinch is a bird which adapts itself easily to living in close proximity to man. It comes readily to food distributed by the public and as long ago as 1957 a female was seen feeding with House Sparrows at the cafeteria, and yet although one pair is usually to be found in the garden the bird is more frequently seen in the woods. The present increase may be related to what appears to be an overall increase in the numbers of finch species, possibly due to several mild winters (see pp. 80, 83) but it remains to be seen whether, perhaps due to some factor such as food or nesting sites, the present breeding population is about all the Park can support.

The Starling and House Sparrow on the other hand showed a marked decrease in numbers and a disappearance as a breeding species during the war-time period. The House Sparrow was recorded by Eric Simms in 1936-39 as common and regularly nesting in Great Spotted Woodpecker holes. The *Report by the Committee on Bird Sanctuaries in the Royal Parks 1951/52* states they were noticeably scarce and in fact usually absent and in 1953/54 they were stated as not breeding in the Park itself though noticeably on the increase. Since then they have steadily increased and they now breed and roost in the arches of the arcade near the cafeteria and under the window arches of the orangery and in 1961 they roosted in a patch of Bamboos. They, with the Feral Pigeons, are the species most commonly fed by the public, appearing in considerable numbers round and on the cafeteria tables, and also where the Peacocks are being fed whether it be with grain by the keepers or bread by the public. They also seem to have developed a taste for sugar which they will take from

the cafeteria sugar bowls. Furthermore one bird at least will fly unconcernedly about the orangery and find its way out at will. They feed as well on grass and insects. While the majority of the sparrows are always to be found round the cafeteria and the house, flocks can often be seen in zone 4 and they also go into the woods and feed on the trees, appearing to be mainly after insects. Investigation showed that a flock of sparrows feeding on two Sycamore in the autumn of 1959 were feeding on aphids. They no longer nest in Woodpecker holes. In the spring of 1960 a pair appeared to take up territory outside such a hole and were to be seen sitting outside it for some days but there was never any sign of nesting. They can often be seen in the woods with nesting material but they never seem to take it to a tree nor are their untidy nests to be seen anywhere. They can be seen flying from the Park to areas outside it so undoubtedly the Park is a feeding area for many sparrows other than the breeding population.

The tables show much the same position with regard to the Starling. Eric Simms gives about 15 pairs as the numbers for 1936-39 when the house was open and the lawns in good condition but the *Report of the Committee on Bird Sanctuaries in the Royal Parks 1951/52* refers specifically to their rarity or almost complete absence and in 1953 they were recorded merely as odd birds with no proof of breeding. From then on they steadily increased with breeding records every year until by 1961 they surpassed their pre-war numbers, 20 pairs being a conservative estimate. They appear to be one of the principal menaces to the Woodpeckers (see p. 75). In the main they breed in holes in the trees, using not only the Woodpecker holes but any other suitable hole they can find, although one pair bred in a hole in the eaves of an empty house in Holland Park. The population seems to be resident and roosting takes place in the winter in the holes used for breeding but there is no large autumn and winter roost in the Park although in 1961 it was used as a gathering ground. Starlings have been observed in the autumn and winter emerging from their roosting holes with something white in their beaks though it has been impossible to ascertain whether this is food or sanitation.

The Starlings do not feed so much as the Sparrows on the food left by the public though they can at times be seen feeding from the litter baskets. They feed on the lawns and the playing field though the large flocks here are probably mainly from outside, and may well find these more suitable feeding grounds when in good condition than when in the rough state of the war-time period. It is possible too, that the more open character of the woodland now, where at times small numbers feed, is more suitable to the Starlings. They also feed in the autumn extensively on the fruit, particularly the pears. This species again thrives where man is but it appears to be rather his cultivation of the ground than the actual direct provision of food which encourages it.

The factors with regard to the Mistle Thrush are less obvious. Cramp and Teagle (*British Birds*, Vol. XLV, pp. 433-456) state "In 1929 a few pairs only were resident and nesting, and outside the grounds of Holland House and Kensington Gardens the species was uncommon. It has

increased in the area during the past few years, possibly due in part to the extermination of the Grey Squirrel. Nests are often in remarkably public places". Eric Simms gives two pairs certainly known in 1936-39 and breeding was proved in 1953. But apart from 1956 there is no actual proof of breeding subsequently until 1960, in which year and in 1961 two pairs were present and breeding was proved. It does seem therefore that there was a slight decrease following the opening of the Park to the public with a return to the pre-war figure in the last two years.

Of the seven garden association birds which have bred or attempted to breed throughout the whole period, the two which would seem to be most related to the woodland character of part of the Park are the Robin and the Wren and here the figures with regard to the Robin are significant. Eric Simms regarded it as a common bird in 1936-39. The 1952 census figure of 29 is, however, markedly higher than any subsequent figure. The count figures for 1959/60 may be on the low side since observations of Robin territories showed 19 autumn territories in 1959 and there were 10 definite nesting sites with possibly three additional breeding territories in 1960, but these latter figures are still below the 1952 census figure. The count figures for 1961 showed a slight increase over 1960 though fewer nest sites were known. D. Lack (*Life of the Robin*) states that in certain parts of Europe the Robin is not a garden bird but secretes itself in the forests, and these figures point to the success of the Robin when the Park was less disturbed and wilder.

On the other hand there are signs that the Robins in Holland Park are becoming urbanized. Robins have been tamed to come to the hand; they will come to the cafeteria for crumbs, one bird whose territory included a pile of logs in one of the enclosures would appear whenever anyone went to the woodpile and wait for one of the logs to be turned over when it would come down and feed on the insects thus exposed. Though in the main the Robins in Holland Park nest on or near the ground and in zones 1 and 3 there have recently been nests on man-made sites.

An interesting isolated observation was that in 1958 a Robin was watched carrying nesting material to a hole in a tree some 12 ft. up which had previously been examined by Great Spotted Woodpeckers and was subsequently taken possession of by the Nuthatches, and from which the Nuthatches were evicted by Starlings in 1959. In view of its exposed and public position on the edge of a public path the attraction of this particular hole in a dying ash tree for so many species seems difficult to explain.

On the other hand the Wren until 1961 showed little or no variation. Eric Simms gave it as a regular nester in 1936-37 with about four pairs present. The subsequent figures were probably mainly singing males. At least two nests were known in 1959 and 1960 and judging by singing males and territories, there were probably several more. Several families of fledged Wrens were recorded in 1960 and at least six regular singing males. This bird has been reported by the gardeners as roosting in a greenhouse in cold winter weather. The Wren is only an irregular breeder in Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, St. James's Park and Green Park. Although it is a bird which is found on high moors and on the sea coast as

well as in woods, E. A. Armstrong (*The Wren*) says that the Wren is only a garden bird where "bricks and mortar do not predominate over greenery" and gives among the most favourable Wren habitats damp deciduous mixed woods with small growth and thick cover and untended garden-woodland areas. He adds, however, that human activities in woods such as making clearings and piling logs sometimes render a locality more attractive to Wrens. It seems likely therefore, that it is the woods in Holland Park with their thicker cover which give the Wren its obviously established position there.

The Great and Blue Tits appear to have declined slightly in numbers since 1939, when Eric Simms estimated about 12 pairs of Great Tits and 10 pairs of Blue Tits. They are both, however, subject to seasonal variations and a large invasion such as that of 1957/58 when early in February, 1958 the numbers present in the Park rose to an estimated 150 may cause an increase in the breeding population the following summer, six Blue Tit nests being identified in 1958 as against two in 1959. These should, however, be regarded as conservative figures, since the count figures for 1959 indicated a higher population.

The Great Tit appears to be a more stable resident species with better marked territories and not subject to such seasonal fluctuations. Birds of both species will take food from the hand. It is of particular interest that while both birds are a garden species and both are tolerant of man, the Blue Tit in Holland Park at any rate tends to be more catholic in its tastes. The Great Tits are to be found in the main in zones 1 and 3, they breed in holes in trees usually only about 5 ft. up though one pair bred in 1958 in a palm tree stump only two or three feet high, in 1960 a pair bred some 20-25 ft. up in a Sycamore and in 1961 Keeper Barker reported a nest in a hole in the ground. The Blue Tits on the other hand range all over the Park, are more frequently to be found in the playing field area and use the nesting boxes more. In 1958 a nesting box in one of the zone 3 enclosures was occupied by Blue Tits; found by the Park staff torn down; replaced in a much more exposed position in a fork of a tree with its entrance hole pointing skywards and occupied again by a pair of Blue Tits, though whether by the same pair is not known.

The Hedge Sparrow has bred or attempted to breed nearly every year. Eric Simms gave it as a regular breeder. The figures were low in the immediate post-1952 years but had regained the 1952 figure by 1958 and have shown an increase since then. This bird is most often to be seen in zone 3 where it feeds on the lawns but it also feeds on the ground in the woods. In 1959 a bird was watched obviously going to a nest some 10 to 12 ft. high in an ivy-covered tree stump in the woods, while in 1960 a nest was found on the ground in the same zone. On the other hand of the four known nests in 1961 only one was in the woods.

The remaining two species of the garden association, the Blackbird and Song Thrush have maintained their status throughout the thirty years under review. Eric Simms in 1936-39 found the Song Thrush a regular breeder in small numbers and the Blackbird common and that remains the position in spite of an increase in 1961. It does seem likely

that the Song Thrush benefited from the wildness of the Park during the war years as the 1952 census figure of 15 is considerably higher than any subsequent figure before 1961, in which year the monthly count figures approached the 1952 figure, and once again it is primarily a woodland bird, in parts of Europe still a comparatively scarce bird of the remoter forests (*Birds of the London Area since 1900*). Nevertheless, far from confining itself to the woods, it is more usual to see it feeding in the other zones where also many of its nests are to be found. It is estimated that 10 pairs bred in 1961. It tends to reduce considerably in numbers during the winter.

The Blackbird is always present in considerable numbers and mainly in the wooded zone and zone 3, although there are usually several feeding on the lawns and playing field. It does not appear to nest abnormally high, a nest in 1960 some 20 feet up in a tree near the playing field being the exception. A nest was, however, built both in 1958 and 1959 in a creeper on the cafeteria wall incorporating lemonade straws and cellophane paper in its material. London Natural History Society records, however, show cellophane wrapping and toffee paper as having been used as nesting material by a Blackbird in the Inner London area in 1949.

The Blackbird vies with the Wood Pigeons, Starlings and House Sparrows as being the commonest bird in the Park and may well be the commonest breeding species, nor does it appear to have been affected by the wildness of the Park in the war years, though there was a falling off in the immediate post-1952 period. In the autumn the birds feed extensively on berries and fruit of all kinds and they roost in large numbers in the big Holly bushes on the edge of the north lawn. The count figures for every year from 1958 to 1961 inclusive show a marked increase in numbers in October/November. There are two pied birds in the Park each occupying a specific territory. One, an almost white bird, to be found in the woods, mated successfully in 1960 but in 1961 it disappeared during the breeding season, returning to its old territory at the end of September.

#### (c) *Other Regular Breeding Species*

Of the four remaining regular breeding species, the Mallard, Jay, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Wood Pigeon, the Mallard stands apart. It is the only water bird regularly breeding in the Park and it is obviously a bird whose natural base is on the large stretches of water in Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens and other parks and which has spread into Holland Park for lack of suitable nesting sites nearer these sheets of water.

Mallard normally only occur in the Park in the breeding season, the first pair usually appearing on the pond in the woods in February. They nest both in the woodland and the more cultivated areas mainly on the ground, unlike the other Inner London parks where the majority of the nests are in trees. The Park staff estimated about 14 broods in 1959, seven broods in 1960 and eleven in 1961. A majority of the ducklings either die or are led away by the duck, there being no areas of water of sufficient size to support a family of ducklings. The hostel moat with no cover either round it or on it has so far attracted no Mallard other than as



a temporary resting place for ducklings. A family successfully reared on it in 1960 were moved there by the Park staff. In 1959 two ducklings were in fact reared on the small goldfish pond in the garden but also with assistance from the Park staff. Eric Simms has no breeding records for this species between 1936-39 although A. Holte Macpherson records a pair nesting in the neighbourhood of the Park in 1931. In 1953 there were said to be two or three nests in the Park so this species does seem to be on the increase although it undoubtedly fluctuates. An indication of the future may lie in the reporting of two Mallard nesting in trees in 1960.

The Jay and Great Spotted Woodpecker are, however, as already mentioned, woodland species which appear to have used Holland Park as a base from which to spread outwards. As recorded by Cramp and Teagle (*British Birds*, Vol. XLV, pp. 433-456) the Jay was an occasional visitor to Inner London up to 1928 but in 1929 a pair was present throughout the summer in the grounds of Holland House. The first proof of breeding was in 1932 and ever since Jays have frequented the area, the spread to Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens having taken place in the 1940s, and the species is now to be found in all the central Royal Parks and in many squares and gardens in the neighbourhood. The numbers in Holland Park itself, however, do not appear to have increased. It seems likely that the Park cannot support more than about 6/8 of the birds and consequently they spread outwards as they increase. Although not normally either shy or retiring and at times very noisy, they are nevertheless quiet and wary during the breeding season and proof of breeding is difficult to obtain. They by no means restrict themselves to the Park itself and can be seen flying across from the Park to Ladbroke Square and other open spaces in the neighbourhood. Early in the morning they can be seen on the roofs and parapets or even on the area railings of houses in the neighbourhood and they will investigate litter baskets in the Parks for food.

There are two records of their mobbing Tawny Owls, one in 1937 from Eric Simms and one in 1957 from Mrs. Mary Stocks, the latter in the grounds of Aubrey House nearby on Campden Hill. On this latter occasion the Owl was actually killed by Jays. Stanley Cramp recorded a Jay taking a very young Sparrow in the Park despite being mobbed by other Sparrows. In the autumn the Jays feed extensively on nuts, fruit and seeds of all kinds. Spring assemblies take place in the Park when up to eleven have been seen at a time.

The Great Spotted Woodpecker, on the other hand, may now be on the decline, as it appears to be generally in Inner London, although breeding was proved in 1960 and 1961. One or two pairs have been present in the Park every year from 1920-39 and 1952-61, with definite breeding records for 1922, 1925, 1935, 1939, 1954, 1960 and 1961. Eric Simms records two pairs breeding in 1936-39. From 1928 this species increased and spread into the near-by Parks, breeding first being proved in Kensington Gardens in 1940 (Cramp and Teagle, *British Birds*, Vol. XLV, pp. 433-456). On the other hand recent observations point to Holland Park being no longer able to support more than one pair. Three birds were seen together

in the early spring of 1958 but there was no evidence of breeding that year. Following considerable drumming in December, 1958 a male bird was found in a dying condition by the Park staff. In the spring of 1960 two females were found dead, one in the Park and one in a nearby garden. A live female was, however, seen subsequently in the Park. There was much activity with considerable drumming in May and early June and although the hole eventually used was not found young birds were seen. Apart from a juvenile in July, there was no evidence of more than a pair of birds in the Park in 1961.

These Woodpeckers seem less well able to hold their own against the Starlings than do the Nuthatches. A. Holte Macpherson records two cases of Starlings evicting Great Spotted Woodpeckers from their nesting holes, one in 1933 and one in 1937. In 1959 two evictions took place and also in 1960. An interesting feature of the holes made by the Woodpeckers in 1960 was that two of them were unusually low down, one only about five feet from the ground and one about seven feet. This might be due to the increasing number of Starlings in the Park restricting the number of suitable trees.

Although the Woodpeckers are wary and not easy to watch they nevertheless go about their business paying little attention to the public. They do not confine themselves to the woodland area of the Park and they feed from bird tables in nearby gardens. It seems probable that the controlling factors where this species are concerned are food and nest sites, both of which must have been adversely affected by the building up of the surrounding area, the increasing number of Starlings, and the inevitable cutting down of a few trees, though the L.C.C. are following a policy of retaining some of the old timber.

With the last regular breeding species the tale is, however, very different. The Wood Pigeon is probably, with the Blackbird and Starling, the commonest breeding bird in the Park and until recently it seemed in this Park to have retained many of its wild and woodland characteristics. Eric Simms recorded it as common in 1936-39 and it has bred every year since 1953. In the main it breeds in the woodland area in the trees. The *Report of the Committee on Bird Sanctuaries in the Royal Parks, 1952* refers to the Wood Pigeons as numerous but surprisingly shy when their tameness in the nearby public parks is considered. In 1961, apart from one hand-tame bird they only rarely came to the cafeteria and fed on the ground there and only a few came to the food fed by the public to the Peafowl, Sparrows and Feral Pigeons. In the main they seem to seek their food on the ground or from the seeds and leaves on the trees.

Another pointer to the Wood Pigeon having retained some of its wilder characteristics in this Park is to be found in the statement by S. Cramp in his paper on "Territorial and Other Behaviour of the Woodpigeon" (*Bird Study*, Vol. 5) that he has not heard the wing "clap" during display flight in central London as frequently as some authorities suggest. This wing clap is sufficiently frequent over the Holland Park area as to be regarded as a usual sound at certain times of the year. It is most likely to be heard early in the morning over the woods.

The Wood Pigeon figures show the usual seasonal drop in the autumn when the birds seek food elsewhere but there has been a considerable Wood Pigeon roost in the Park during the autumn and winter every year since 1959.

Following reports from the Park staff in 1959 of pigeons falling down and dying, a dead Wood Pigeon and a dead Feral Pigeon were kindly examined by the Zoological Society's Pathological Department and reported to have died of gastroenteritis, possibly of an infectious nature. A dead Wood Pigeon sent for examination in 1960 had died of tuberculosis.

(d) *Irregular Breeding Species*

This category can be divided roughly into those species which have been recorded in the Park throughout the period but have not bred regularly, the Stock Dove, the Tawny Owl, and the Carrion Crow, and those whose presence, like their breeding is spasmodic, the warblers, the Spotted Flycatcher, the Pied Wagtail and the Goldfinch, with two additional species, the Feral Pigeon and the Marsh Tit.

According to Cramp and Teagle (see page 67) the Stock Dove spread outward from Holland Park. A. Holte Macpherson recorded one pair as nesting in the grounds of Holland House. Eric Simms believed there were never more than two pairs present. Since the war one or two birds were recorded in most years up to and including 1959 though without any definite breeding evidence. Since this species is now scarce in all Inner London the absence of recent records does not appear to be related in any way to conditions in Holland Park but to some external factor.

The Tawny Owl has been resident in the Park throughout the whole period and the lack of breeding evidence between 1954 and 1959 is curious. Two pairs have, however, bred successfully in 1960 and 1961 and it may be that only more intensive observation was necessary to secure this evidence. A. Holte Macpherson said at least two pairs were resident and breeding and Eric Simms also recorded two pairs. During the winter months Tawny Owls can often be seen roosting high in certain trees during the day and at times two have been recorded roosting together. There appear to be two marked territories, one on the east side of the Park and one on the west. H. N. Southern (*Ibis*, 1954) says that territories may be more permanent than the owners and he deduced from evidence that the ownership of a territory had changed perhaps more than once. Assuming this to be so the eastern territory seems to have been an unlucky one. It was probably a bird from this territory which was killed by Jays (see p. 74), it was in this area that a bird was found shot in the autumn of 1958 and when a dangerous tree had to be taken down in this area in the spring of 1960 there was evidence that a pair of Tawny Owls were using it for breeding. The clutch was not complete and a pair of Tawny Owls was subsequently found to be breeding in a tree not far away. They bred successfully although the young fledged about three weeks later than the pair on the west.

This might be an explanation of a curious series of incidents that occurred in November, 1960. First a Tawny Owl was found dead and a post mortem showed it had died of starvation. A few days later Keeper

Barker reported a Tawny Owl which was being mobbed had flown down to his feet. It was kept in captivity for a short while and subsequently released. In the meantime information was received of a tame Tawny Owl appearing in the garden of a nearby house during the day. There was some doubt about the date and consequently it is impossible to say whether or not it was the bird which had been in captivity. Subsequently another dead Tawny Owl was found but in too bad condition for examination. Unfortunately it is not possible to regard this as a consequence of the difficulties a late fledged family of Tawny Owls might have in carving out territories for themselves as the possibility of tame birds having been released in the Park cannot be excluded. The only analagous incident in 1961 was a young bird being rescued from mobbing by the Park staff from an exposed ledge during daylight on June 1st and subsequently released.

A number of pellets have been found all the year round and analysis of pellets both in 1936-39 and in the post-war period has shown a high proportion of Sparrows though larger birds and a few mammals have been taken. The following is a list of the species and numbers found in the pellets collected during 1958, 1959 and 1961.

House Sparrow	83
Starling	4
Thrush/Blackbird	16
Finch species	3
Jay	1
	— 107
Brown Rat	3
Field Mouse ( <i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i> )	1
House Mouse	3
Short Tailed Field Vole ( <i>Microtus agrestis</i> )	1
	— 8

Beetle and earthworm remains have also been found. In addition to the *Apodemus* listed above which was found in July, 1959 remains of a mouse of this species were also found in a pellet in November, 1957. None has been found since and it is to be regretted that no earlier evidence is available about this species. The Vole is an isolated record found in the early part of 1961 and may have been picked up elsewhere by a wandering bird. Remains of a House Sparrow and of a Goldfish (*Carassius auratus*) were found in March 1961, in a large pellet not typical of a Tawny Owl and in view of the presence of Herons in the Park from time to time (see p. 83) this cannot be regarded as evidence of a Tawny Owl having taken this fish although Tawny Owls are known to have taken Trout (*Handbook of British Birds*).\* H. N. Southern (*Ibis*, 1954) quoted figures in connexion with the researches in Wytham Wood near Oxford which show that the birds taken by Tawny Owls in that wood amount only to 3% to 5% of the

\*In 1962 a frog skull was found in a typical Tawny Owl pellet from the same pellet post as the goldfish pellet which lends support to the possibility that the goldfish was in fact taken by a Tawny Owl.

total vertebrate prey. The figures given above speak for themselves in this connexion. H. N. Southern also showed that in the bird prey taken at Wytham the Chaffinch was pre-eminent and suggested this might have been because there were no Sparrows there. He further stated that Tawny Owls eat earthworms regularly and freely and that this habit may perhaps contribute to the remarkable success of and abundance of the Tawny Owl. Certainly this species' eating habits are adaptable to its environment.

The Carrion Crow, which with the Tawny Owl and the Jay comprise the principal bird predators of the area, is also regularly to be seen in the Park although the only breeding records are in 1959 and 1960.

It is, however, a long ranging bird and may well have bred in neighbouring squares and parks. It is frequently to be seen feeding on the playing field and the north lawns but in the spring it has been seen with an egg in its beak and it will also eat dead birds. In 1959 and 1960 a pair bred in a tall tree on the building site fronting on to Kensington High Street but this area is now being built up and this contraction of open space seems the only factor likely adversely to affect this species, although in 1960 a second pair bred on the northern edge of the Park itself.

The species which seem most likely to be vulnerable to human interference are the warblers, which throughout the period under review have tended to find the grounds of Holland Park the nearest favourable habitat to the centre of London.

In 1929 A. Holte Macpherson said that two pairs of Blackcaps generally stayed to nest in the grounds of Holland House but there are no subsequent breeding records until 1960 although Eric Simms suspected breeding in 1937. Blackcaps were heard singing in 1952, 1953 and 1954 and a single male was both heard and seen in May and June, 1958. It was not, however, until 1960 that there was any sign of their regaining their old status. That spring, there was an influx, both males and females being seen. Two pairs appeared to remain to breed, one pair taking up territory in a clearing in the woods, breeding being proved, and the other pair seemed to be in a disused garden on the edge of the Park. In 1961 there was successful breeding by one pair with two singing males. It is obvious from this that these birds like thick undergrowth and no disturbance and they may well have been in the Park during the 1939/1952 interregnum.

The Chiffchaff has been present in the Park during the breeding season since 1958, and the Willow Warbler from 1958-60; despite every effort the 1961 position remains obscure. The Willow Warbler bred before the war and breeding has been recorded subsequently in 1953, 1958 and 1959 and probably in 1960. The only definite breeding record for the Chiffchaff was in 1937 but the bird was present in 1952 and 1953 and also from 1957-60, breeding being probable in 1958. It is notable that there was an apparent absence of both these warblers in the 1954-57 period shortly after the Park was open to the public but that they reappeared subsequently. Their nesting habits, however, make them particularly vulnerable to the operations of the Park staff. It is very probable that the Chiffchaff in 1958 bred in an overgrown area on the edge of the

woods on the western side of the Park which was, during the following winter, considerably cleaned up. In 1959 it shifted its ground to the north-east corner where it may have bred in the overgrown garden already referred to in connexion with the Blackcap, and in 1960 it shifted again apparently being located in the same area as the Willow Warbler. In 1961 a singing bird was present throughout the breeding season being heard in all parts of the Park. The Willow Warbler, on the other hand, bred in 1958 and 1959 in the same enclosure in zone 3 where there are several water tanks and a good deal of long grass and it also occupied the same area in 1960. Through the co-operation of the Park staff scything in 1958 and 1960 did not take place till the young birds had fledged but in 1959 the nest was nearly accidentally scythed. In fact the birds did bring off their young successfully and as they reappeared in 1960 did not seem to have been affected by the experience. There is no indication that weather conditions affect the appearance of these warblers, since although 1959 was exceptionally fine and breeding early, 1958 was a cold wet season with late breeding. On the other hand although Willow Warblers passed through the Park in 1961 they did not seem to stay. There was a good deal of ground disturbance in the enclosure they favoured which may have had some effect.

The status of the Spotted Flycatcher in the Park is peculiar. It is recorded as having bred in Holland Park before the war but apart from the odd observation of a bird obviously passing through it was not recorded subsequently till 1959 when there was an influx of at least three and probably more pairs, one pair breeding in a yew tree near the staff office, the favourite perch of another bird being another yew tree overhanging the hostel moat, and a pair being located in the north-east corner of the Park. 1959 being an exceptionally hot summer might have some bearing on this sudden appearance but a similar number appeared again in 1960 and took up the same territories, even the same yew tree being used again for nesting. In 1961 a similar number appeared but the yew tree was abandoned. However, two broods were reared by one pair nesting in an exposed position on the edge of a public footpath in the woods.

Certainly the absence for so many years of such a garden-loving bird relatively common in the London area from so suitable a habitat as the cultivated area of zone 2 has been unusual. It could have been, of course, that the wild character of the grounds in the war-time drove the birds off. Indeed it is stated in *Birds of the London Area since 1900* that this species seems to favour sites with little or no undergrowth. Similar fluctuations have, however, been recorded in Kensington Gardens and other parks.

The Pied Wagtail bred in Holland Park so far as is known for the first time in 1961. It is a bird which has been frequently seen in Inner London for many years and there seems no obvious reason why it should not have appeared in Holland Park records before. The first record was in May, 1958 when a bird was noted carrying nesting material. It was not recorded during the autumn and winter of 1958/59 but was seen at intervals from April, 1959 to November, 1961. The nest site was not found in 1961 but the bird was seen carrying food on a number of occasions and juveniles

were seen several times. It frequents the lawns where it feeds and the nursery area and will fly up and perch in the trees nearby.

The Goldfinch is a bird which has shown a marked increase during the past two years. A. Holte Macpherson regarded it as an uncommon visitor saying he had never seen more than two Goldfinches at a time in London except on November 5th, 1921 when he found a small charm in the grounds of Holland House. It was recorded from the neighbourhood in 1937 and 1946. The first post-war record was in February, 1957 when Lord Hurcomb saw eight; in 1960, however, they were reported in small numbers both in the spring and in the autumn and again in the spring of 1961 when a pair nested in the nursery area with some encouragement from the Park staff. There was a considerable movement in the autumn of 1961, up to 20 being seen in September and up to 40 in October. These birds favour the cultivated zone and the waste ground of zone 4.

It remains to be seen whether these will be isolated breeding records only.

The Marsh Tit, which has bred once in 1937 and been recorded once subsequently, can hardly be regarded as anything other than an isolated instance with little bearing on the main theme, and although a pair of Whitethroats attempted to breed in 1960 this was not repeated in 1961, and indeed breeding by this species is unlikely to be successful as the only suitable area is close to the Children's Playground and subject to constant disturbance.

Finally, in this discussion of the status of the breeding species of the Park comes the Feral Pigeon. Here again is a species which, like the Mallard, has invaded the Park from its urban surroundings rather than using it as a base from which a less adaptable species can launch out. It was not recorded pre-war but in 1952 it was using the ruins of the house for roosting and probably also for breeding but was almost absent from the Park itself. Obviously it was going outside for its food. Now there is a small breeding and roosting colony in the ruins of the house, but the majority of the birds, which can number up to a hundred, come in from outside to be fed by the public. The largest flock of feeding birds is usually near the Kensington High Street entrance to the Park but there is also usually a flock of about 20 near the North Lawn in zone 2 and in the cafeteria neighbourhood when it is open. Formerly these birds frequented almost entirely the second or cultivated zone but with the feeding by the public of Tits and Robins in the woods the Feral Pigeons are beginning to be found on the woodland paths. So oblivious of the general public are they that they will carry out courtship display ending in copulation among the occupied tables of the cafeteria with people walking about all the time.

From this discussion of the facts relating to the breeding species recorded in Holland Park during the past forty years it is apparent that the war-time period produced a bird population with more rural and woodland characteristics both as regards species, numbers and habits than heretofore; that the cleaning up of the Park in 1952 followed by its opening to the public produced an immediate decrease in the bird population and the virtual disappearance of the warblers in particular, and that after

about six years the bird population built up again with not only a very marked increase in such predominantly urban species as the House Sparrows, Starling and Feral Pigeon but also the return of the warblers and some finches. While the increased numbers of some of the species, for instance the finches, might be partly attributable to some external cause as, for instance, a mild winter, this would not appear to apply to the warblers which have merely regained their lost ground. Although the increase in the urban species, which is undoubtedly due to human interference, might in the long run have an adverse effect on the more vulnerable species, such as the warblers and the Woodpeckers, it nevertheless seems probable that

TABLE 3

<i>Name of Species</i>	<i>1952 Census May 25</i>	<i>1958 May</i>	<i>1959 May</i>	<i>1960 May</i>	<i>1961 May</i>
Mallard	3	3	2	2	2
Sparrow Hawk	—	—	—	—	—
	(1 Apr. 17)				
Stock Dove	1	1	1	—	—
Wood Pigeon	30	40	40	25	34
				(62 Apr. 10)	(69 Apr. 8)
Feral Pigeon	1	10	22	32	30
Tawny Owl	—	1	1	1	1
	(1 Apr. 17)				
Swift (over)	2	2	2	2	1
Green Woodpecker	1	—	—	—	—
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1	2	1	1	2
Crow	1	1	1	1	1
Jay	7	6	6	8	7
Great Tit	5	6	5	6	7
Blue Tit	4	8	6	6	12
				(13 Apr. 10)	
Coal Tit	1	1	2	1	—
Nuthatch	—	2	1	2	1
Wren	4	4	3	4	10
Mistle Thrush	—	1	—	2	1
Song Thrush	15	6	4	7	6
					(15 Apr. 8)
Blackbird	45	20	20	29	34
				(47 Mar. 5)	(62 Apr. 8)
Robin	29	10	8	10	17
Blackcap	1	1	—	2	1
Willow Warbler	1	2	2	1	—
Chiffchaff	1	1	1	1	1
Spotted Flycatcher	—	—	1	2	1
Hedge Sparrow	8	6	7	5	15
				(17 Mar. 5)	
Starling	20	15	15	9	26
	(Nil Apr. 17)	(40 Apr. 24)		(21 Mar. 5)	(36 Apr. 8)
Greenfinch	—	—	2	3	6
Chaffinch	2	1	3	2	4
House Sparrow	8	10	15	50	36
	(Nil Apr. 17)	(20 Apr. 24)		(35 Apr. 10)	(60 Apr. 8)
<b>Total</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>256</b>



judicious cultivation of the Park is creating conditions exceptionally favourable to a high population density, a situation described by E. M. Nicholson in his book *Birds and Men*, with the hope that some of the more vulnerable species may continue to maintain themselves alongside the commoner species.

### **Non-Breeding Birds**

Since intensive observations must increase the records of casual birds visiting an area too much importance cannot be attached to the great increase in the number of such observations in 1959, 1960 and 1961. A comparison of the tables given in Figs. 3 and 4 shows that the only bird in Fig. 3 common enough to be included in the census figures is the Swift and reference has already been made to this species, which nesting about a mile away, can be seen in small numbers over the Park during the months of May to August.

The rest of the species named in Fig. 3 can be roughly divided into two categories: (1) those which are obviously seen only on odd occasions, for instance during migration or weather movements, and (2) those which are commoner and some of which might even on some future occasion be found to have bred. The Woodcock, Swallow, House Martin, Redwing, Redpoll, Brambling, Pied Flycatcher, Grey Wagtail and Peregrine Falcon obviously belong to the first category. Redwings, being winter migrants may be present in the Park for some weeks as was the case in February, 1960. The Grey Wagtail has been reported by the Park staff on odd occasions in the past but in the autumn of 1959 with the advent of the hostel moat one remained for several weeks. The Mute Swan and Lapwing are records of birds flying over. The Cuckoo was recorded by A. Holte Macpherson on several occasions and in addition to a number of May records both pre- and post-war has been recorded in June in 1939, 1940, 1953, 1960 and 1961.

Turning to category (2), three birds which are unobtrusive and easily overlooked have been reported during the last two years, namely the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, the Goldcrest and the Hawfinch. The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was recorded in the Campden Hill area in April, 1932, September, 1938 and February, 1941. There are post-war Holland Park records in January, 1953, April, 1954, September, 1959, March, April and May, 1960 and the same months in 1961. Either, therefore, this Woodpecker is resident but so unobtrusive that it is only recorded when drumming is taking place, or, there is a certain amount of movement among these Woodpeckers, particularly in the spring. It is noteworthy that the Greater Spotted Woodpecker has been seen to drive off the Lesser in Holland Park.

The first definite record for a Goldcrest was in October, 1959, when there was a small autumn influx, but its presence has been suspected in other years. It was recorded in the spring and autumn of 1960 and 1961 and although at present it appears as a migrant it might well some time stay to breed.

The third particularly shy bird, the Hawfinch was recorded on May 4th, 1932 and at the end of April, 1960.

Another 1960 spring record of particular interest was the Redstart. This bird, a male, stayed nearly a month, taking up territory in the Children's Playground where it could be heard singing at the top of one of the trees most mornings. A male appeared early in April, 1961, but only stayed four days. There is only one pre-war record in April, 1931. The Garden Warbler, also reported pre-war as a passage migrant, was reported in 1960 and 1961. Either of these species might produce breeding records in the future.

The Treecreeper is a bird which it might be hoped would establish itself as a breeding species, since it has bred in Kensington Gardens but it has never been more than a casual visitor. Long Tailed Tits, which are known to have nomadic tendencies during the winter, tend to appear in small parties during the winter months but do not stay. Up to the autumn of 1961 the only Bullfinch records were isolated ones but in October, 1961, a pair appeared in the Park and were seen from time to time subsequently throughout the autumn and winter. There is evidence of a general increase in this species not confined to London, possibly due to two mild winters.\* The first breeding record for Inner London was in Regent's Park in 1959.

It is a pity that the two visits of Jackdaws in 1953 were not followed by the transfer of the small Jackdaw colony in Kensington Gardens menaced by the felling of trees there, but the few subsequent records offer no hope of this.

Kestrels breed in Kensington so records of Kestrels over the Park from time to time are to be expected but a majority of the records in 1960 and 1961 have been in the autumn. The Heron on the other hand is a little more difficult to explain in view of the small amount of water in the Park. However, this species, which was raiding the goldfish pond at dusk in the autumn and winter of 1958/59 was also recorded as raiding the fishpond in Derry & Tom's roof garden early in March, 1956 (*London Bird Report*). A Heron is known to have been on the Long Water in Kensington Gardens for much of the 1958/59 autumn and winter and it may well have been this bird which paid the visits at dusk. It was seen again in the autumn of 1959 but discontinued its regular visits, partly because of the cleaning out of the pond. Subsequent records have been of odd birds flying over but it is worth noting that a Heron which flew over the north side of the Park early one spring morning in 1960 was chased off by a Carrion Crow nesting that side.

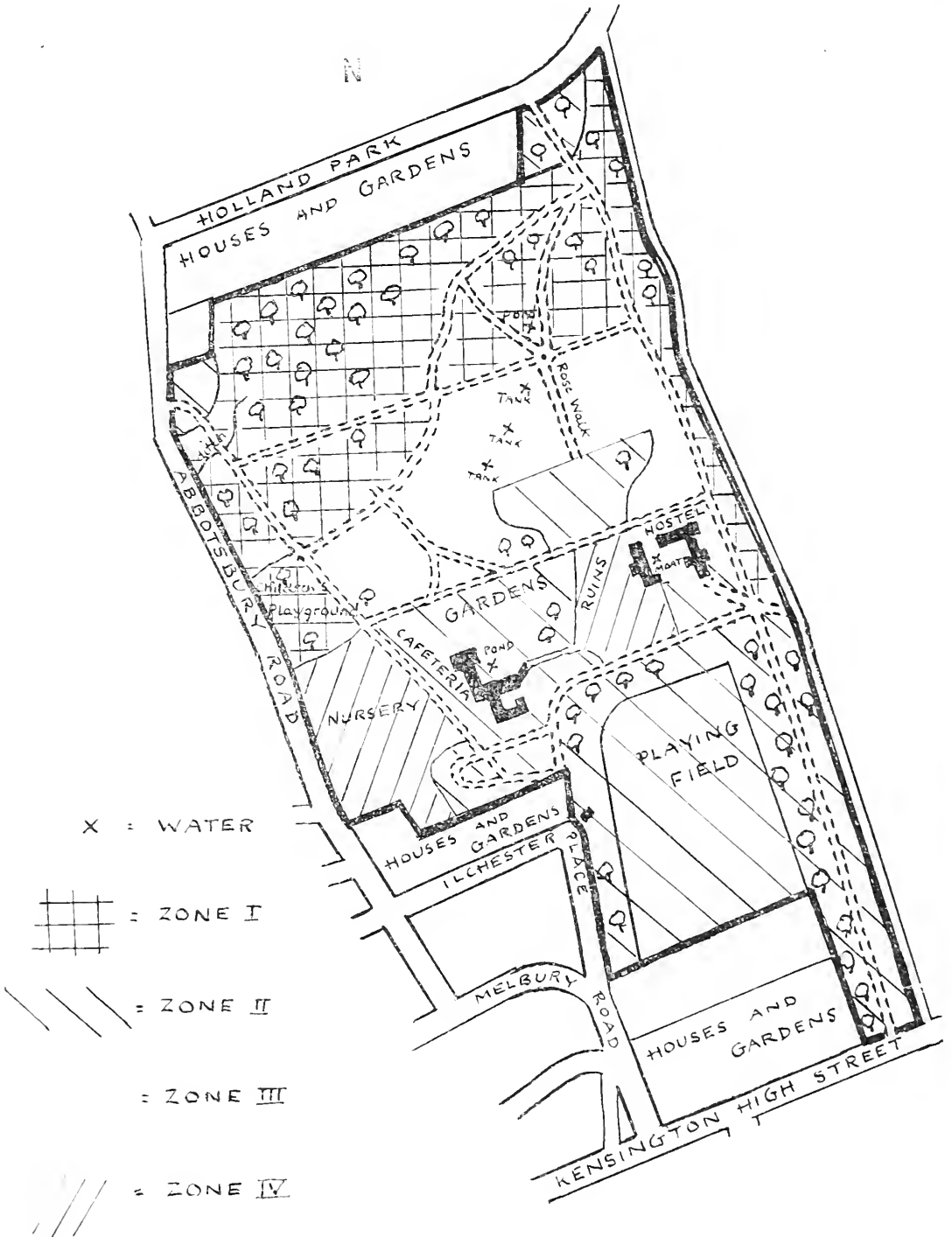
No account of the bird life of the Park would be complete without some reference to the gulls. These are frequently to be seen flying over the Park, especially in the autumn and winter and this was also the case pre-war, but until 1959 they rarely came down into the Park. However, in the autumn of that year an odd gull was seen for a short while on the playing

\*A post-mortem carried out in January, 1962, on a Bullfinch found dead in Holland Park showed it to have died of pneumonia, it being thought that these birds are particularly susceptible to cold.

field and at the turn of the year Black Headed Gulls began to come down on to the main drive near Kensington High Street to feed on bread and scraps left by the public. In the autumn of 1961 came the first record of them coming down on to the playing field itself. By this time the south side of the playing field was being built up and this building may be an explanation.

**Human Interference**

Birds on the whole are remarkably unaffected by the human beings around them provided they are left alone. They will carry on all their



normal activities and even warblers will remain quite unaffected by a crowd of people with noisy children on a lawn within a few yards of their nesting site if it is in an enclosed area. If fed frequently, however, and not frightened, birds will become remarkably tame.

There are two forms of human interference which can be both beneficial and damaging:

- (a) direct, i.e. destruction of nests and eggs and shooting of the birds or conversely their active protection, provision of nest boxes, feeding etc.;
- (b) indirect, i.e. the effect of cultivation and building on the habitat and food supply etc.

In Holland Park everything possible on the direct beneficial side is being done. The Superintendent and staff are interested in the birds and assist in preventing the destruction of nests and eggs (grass is not scythed till after the breeding season), in the provision of nest boxes and even in the feeding in winter of species such as Nuthatches, Tits and Robins, and insecticides are not used.

It is on the indirect side that the danger lies. The very tidying up of the Park that inevitably takes place at times, the scything of grass, the felling of unsafe trees, and on a wider field, the building up of the surrounding area together with the direct feeding assistance of the public must encourage the more adaptable species such as the House Sparrow, Starling and pigeons to the detriment of the more unusual woodpeckers, warblers and finches.

On the other hand the policy of the L.C.C. to preserve some of the woodland characteristics of the Park, and in particular by enclosing certain areas thus preserving them from the trampling down of the vegetation and from disturbance, by conserving some of the older trees and by careful cultivation, may be providing such suitable habitats as to encourage the more unusual birds and overcome the disadvantages, though more water would be an asset.

The most marked changes which can be attributed directly or indirectly to human interference can be listed as follows:

- (1) Changes in the status of species:
  - (a) the loss of the Green Woodpecker and Sparrow Hawk;
  - (b) the increase in the numbers of House Sparrows and Starlings and their post-war return as a breeding species;
  - (c) the change in the position of the Feral Pigeon from being a species breeding and roosting in the ruins but feeding mainly outside the Park, to one feeding in considerable numbers in the Park but with only a small breeding and roosting population;
  - (d) the decrease up to 1961 in the number of Robins and Song Thrushes.
- (2) Changes in habits:
  - (a) the increasing tameness of the bird population as a whole but particularly of Wood Pigeons, Jays, Great, Blue and Coal Tits and Robins;

- (b) the tendency of the Coal Tit and Mallard to breed high;
- (c) Jays, Starlings and Blue Tits feeding at times from litter baskets;
- (d) the changed diet of the Tawny Owls to one consisting largely of birds, with a majority of House Sparrows.

### Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Mr. Stanley Cramp for his advice and criticism and encouragement and also for past records, Mr. Eric Simms and Mr. W. G. Teagle for information and records, Lord Hurcomb, Mr. R. S. R. Fitter and Mr. D. I. M. Wallace for much helpful advice, Mrs. Parslow and Dr. Geoffrey Beven for analysing Owl pellets, the Zoological Society of London for their kindness in carrying out post mortems on a number of casualties, and my sister, Barbara Brown, for drawing the map.

I would also like to acknowledge and express my thanks to Mr. F. T. Hillier, Superintendent of Holland Park, for much assistance, to Keeper Ron Barker for many valuable observations and to other members of the Park staff for their help and co-operation.

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### Appendix

#### LIST OF SCIENTIFIC NAMES OF BIRDS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT (in the Wetmore Order)

Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
Sparrow Hawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
Stock Dove	<i>Columbus oenas</i>
Feral Pigeon	<i>Columbus livia</i>
Wood Pigeon	<i>Columbus palumbus</i>
Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>

Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>
Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>
Marsh Tit	<i>Parus palustris</i>
Long Tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>
Treecreeper	<i>Certha familiaris</i>
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus ericetorum</i>
Redwing	<i>Turdus musicus</i>
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>
Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>
Spotted flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
Pied Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa hypoleuca</i>
Hedge Sparrow	<i>Prunella modularis</i>
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>
Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Redpoll	<i>Carduelis flammea</i>
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>

## A Short Account of Rye Meads, Herts., and its Ornithology

By T. W. GLADWIN

### (1) Introduction

THIS paper is based on observations made by the author and others at Rye Meads Sewage Purification Works, Herts., on visits covering over 700 different days from 1957 to March, 1962. It attempts to describe the area and its operations and the changes in the avifauna brought about by changing habitats as the works were developed. The species that breed and otherwise occur at Rye Meads, and the migrations observed there are discussed.

### (2) Location and General Description

Originally Rye Meads (National Grid Reference TL 390105) were water meadows situated in the Lea Valley at its confluence with the River Stort. The rivers Lea and Stort flow along the western and southern boundaries of Rye Meads respectively. An area of 115 acres of these meadows were used by the Ware Urban District Council for the disposal of sewage by broad irrigation until being absorbed by the construction of the modern sewage purification works which occupies a site of 263 acres; this being the study area of this paper. The meadows to the north of the site remain untouched by development. These meadows consist of about 18 inches of poor quality clay overlying 10 feet of peat. Effluent percolation lagoons are located on the site of the original Ware Sewage Farm where the level of the land is slightly above that of the adjacent water meadows. Gravel of a different origin is the surface form here. The summer and winter water table levels are at or near ground level on the meadows but the increasing domestic demands on the water of the Lea Valley and the pumping of water from nearby excavations while structural work was in progress have reduced these levels in recent years although the effect of the latter is restricted to about a quarter mile radius. The system of effluent disposal by natural percolation might, however, be expected to maintain the local levels of both underground and surface water in the future. The operation and details of the works and surrounds are given in more detail in 3 and 4 below.

The slopes of the Lea Valley rise about 150 feet above the river in East Herts. and are distinct features of the landscape. The valley itself is of great migrational importance, as is shown later. Mixed farmland with hedgerows, water meadows, and small mixed woodlands on the higher ground, form most of the immediate environment, although the residential outskirts of Hoddesdon approach to within a quarter of a mile of the western boundary. Noise from a nearby sports stadium and pleasure craft on the River Lea do not seem to disturb the birds in any way.

### (3) **Operation of Rye Meads Sewage Purification Works**

Rye Meads Sewage Purification Works is *not* a sewage farm and it will be shown that the avifauna is by no means typical of such a locality. In order to appreciate this difference and to understand the importance of certain habitats a short account of the operation of the works is necessary.

The Middle Lee Regional Drainage Scheme was designed to deal with the drainage problems of the middle reaches of the Lea Valley in which are situated Stevenage, Harlow and Welwyn Garden City. The outfall from these places is treated at the Rye Meads' works, the construction of which started in 1951 and which was first commissioned in June, 1956.

At the present time Rye Meads is the most modern plant of its type. The latest methods of sewage purification and disposal are utilized; purification being by sedimentation and bio-aeration. Sludge is digested and run into drying beds and lagoons to de-water. Methane given off in the sludge digestion plant supplies power for the works. Some of the water effluent is passed through sand filters and is then run directly into the river, whilst the rest of the effluent is pumped into gravel banked lagoons from which disposal is effected by natural percolation. Most of the effluent ( $1\frac{1}{4}$  million gallons per day) percolates vertically into the underground water system and lesser amounts laterally through the banks into a system of surrounding ditches. Together with the effluent from the sand filters (4 m.g.d.), the ditches are drained into the River Lea below Fieldes Weir. The Lea Valley is an important source of water for London and it is the policy of the works that purification should be "to something better than Royal Commission Standard". Certainly the high purification of the effluent permits the existence of sensitive plant and aquatic life which in turn is at least partly responsible for the richness of the avifauna. In the early stages of treatment mineral grit is removed from the sewage and spread on open ground to dry. This grit, which also contains barley grains, peas and tea leaves, attracts large numbers of finches, starlings and sparrows.

### (4) **The habitats and their birds**

Rye Meads consists of several very different habitats with nearly independent avifaunas and they are now described separately.

(a) *The Effluent Lagoons.* There are seventeen gravel banked lagoons with a total surface area of 57.8 acres which occupy the western part of the site (originally the Ware U.D. Sewage Farm) and which vary in size from about thirteen acres to half an acre. The lagoons have a minimum depth of three feet and are divided into two groups by the toll road which bisects the whole site from east to west. Those in the northern group (30.3 acres) are independently banked and are mostly separated by very moist gullies formed by their banks. The southern group (27.5 acres) are commonly banked and the divisions appear as a series of gravel causeways.

During the excavation stage in 1957 the area was little more than a barren mass of gravel. Several pairs of Little Ringed Plover and a single pair of Ringed Plover nested at this time. The lagoon bottoms were muddy at the time each was completed and by the late summer of 1957



many contained large shallow pools. At this time also a dense vegetation of sedges, docks and persicarias began to appear in the first lagoons completed, but the lagoon banks remained barren. Throughout August and September of this year up to 700 Mallard flighted between the pools and corn fields up to at least 12 miles distant. After this the numbers quickly dropped; possibly assisted by the excessive attentions of wildfowlers. By far the most exciting event in the autumn of 1957 was the occurrence of large numbers of waders attracted by the expanses of mud. Maxima included Green Sandpiper 18, Common Sandpiper 15, Greenshank 14, Little Stint 12, Dunlin 45, and Ruff 3. No fewer than 22 species of wader, including Temminck's Stint, Pectoral Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank and Grey Phalarope, occurred that autumn, confirming the belief that large numbers of waders regularly migrate over East Hertfordshire although the lack of suitably attractive habitats causes them to pass straight through and therefore remain unseen. Additionally it illustrated the limited attraction of sludge beds at sewage farms to waders. Extensive sludge drying beds exist at Rye Meads but apart from a few plovers, Redshank and Ruff very few waders are seen there. As further evidence of this limitation a lagoon was emptied in July, 1959, and once again large numbers of waders were recorded with maxima of 7 Wood Sandpiper, 3 Common Sandpiper, 15 Dunlin and 4 Ruff. One is left wondering what August and September would have produced had the lagoon been left empty.

Late in 1957 the first lagoons were flooded, followed by the rest in the spring and early summer of 1958. Ducks and the Coot began to replace waders and Table 1 shows the average population of certain species in December of each year of the study period. Each average results from no fewer than five counts of at least weekly frequency.

TABLE I

<i>Species</i>	<i>Average number of the species shown in December of the given year</i>				
	<i>1957</i>	<i>1958</i>	<i>1959</i>	<i>1960</i>	<i>1961</i>
Mallard	67	42	50	16	9
Teal	9	17	15	5	1
Tufted Duck	4	17	34	75	63
Pochard	—	6	10	17	5
Goldeneye	—	—	2	2	4
Coot	2	13	22	53	95

Waterfowl populations decrease considerably whenever the lagoons become frozen and hence it was necessary to take the figures for a winter month when this condition least occurred in order to provide a reliable comparison. The table provides a good illustration of the increase in diving ducks and the decrease of surface feeders during the study period. It seems reasonable to assume that these trends are due to changes in the aquatic animal life and vegetation, and the flooding of the lagoons. Sage in his work on Hilfield Park Reservoir (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, Vol. XXV, pp. 131-158) has added further evidence in support of the theory



PLATE 2. YOUNG JAY (photographed by A. C. Parker)



that the waterfowl populations of new reservoirs, etc., increase over several seasons and then drop slightly, thereafter maintaining a stable level. The Rye Meads populations have apparently adhered to these beliefs and assuming no major changes in the lagoon habitats then future data will indicate when the stable state has been reached. The wide variety of waterfowl that have occurred on the lagoons can be seen in the appended list of species. Large numbers of Black-headed Gulls and a few Common Gulls come to the lagoons in the winter. Lesser Black-backed Gulls are common in migration but Great Black-backed and Herring Gulls are comparatively rare birds at all times.

By the summer of 1958 a dense ground vegetation had begun to appear around the lagoon areas and only now (1962) has the plant community shown any signs of being settled. Canadian Fleabane (*Conyza canadensis*) and Oxford Ragwort (*Senecio squalidus*) were the predominant forms on the lagoon banks to start with, and Great Hairy Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), Reed Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), and various Persicarias (*Polygonum* species) in the gullies and other moist places. Gradually the Oxford Ragwort and Persicarias have been replaced by Docks (*Rumex obtusifolius* and *R. crispus*) and Nettles (*Urtica dioica*). The Great Hairy Willowherb and Reed Grass have become more abundant and Common Mallow (*Malva sylvestris*) appeared abundantly. Various sedges have also become abundant along the eastern side of the north lagoon areas.

The appearance of the vegetation provided conventional nest sites for many species. Mallard, Tufted Duck, Coot, Sedge Warblers, Yellow Wagtails and Reed Buntings being the dominant species so involved. Tufted Duck and Coot first nested in 1959. Little Ringed Plover no longer find the habitat to their liking and fewer Skylarks nest than when the vegetation first appeared and was relatively sparse. Other breeding species include Little Grebe (commonly on the lagoons) Marsh Warbler and Meadow Pipit. Large pre-dispersal gatherings of Little Grebe and Coot take place in late July and August.

Two other aspects of the lagoons remain to be mentioned. The first is the long gravel causeway, virtually devoid of vegetation, which bisects the south lagoons from north to south, and along which one finds large numbers of ground feeding birds during the migration periods. Several hundred pipits and wagtails have frequently been observed at the southern end of this causeway and the reason for their being there is still unknown. The birds concerned are always resting migrants which one would have expected to find on other apparently more suitable parts of the site where insect food is more abundant.

Finally mention must be made of birds which feed over the lagoons. These include terns on passage, hirundines and Swifts. Common and Black Terns occur in the spring and autumn of most years and may remain for several days. Hirundines and Swifts are especially numerous at migration times. Sand Martins are the most numerous of these, especially in autumn when several thousand have been known to occur. Swallows occur in lesser numbers while House Martins rarely total more than a hundred. Hundreds of Swifts also occur on passage but these are more numerous on

summer evenings when several thousand may come to feed on the dense clouds of insects.

(b) *The Sludge Drying Beds and Sludge Lagoons.* The sludge drying beds (9.6 acres) and sludge lagoons (c. 12 acres) are sited along the southern and eastern boundaries of Rye Meads respectively. They are purely low concrete structures or shallow excavations into which liquid digested sludge is run to dry. The sludge lagoons are bounded by low banks with a rich flora of Nettles, Docks, Persicarias, Sowthistles (*Sonchus* spp.) and Willow Saplings (*Salix* spp.). Celery-leaved Crowfoot (*Ranunculus sceleratus*) is an abundant species on the sludge lagoons themselves. Larks, pipits, wagtails and Starlings feed commonly on the sludge and small numbers of waders occur on passage. Reed Buntings and a few pairs of Whitethroats and Yellow Wagtails nest in the fringe vegetation, where flocks of feeding finches and sparrows occur from autumn to spring. Duncocks and Wrens are surprisingly common around the sludge lagoons, especially in the autumn where they are presumably attracted by food.

The drying beds are shallow rectangular concrete structures and a comparison of the avifauna here with that described above makes it possible to judge the effects of a fringe vegetation. Larks, pipits, Pied Wagtails and Starlings are the most numerous feeding species, especially in winter when they are joined by a hundred or more Black-headed Gulls which flight from their roost on the Lea Valley Reservoirs. Small numbers of Chaffinches and Tree Sparrows also feed here and Green Sandpipers are usually present in small numbers throughout the year. Most of the birds feed on drying beds where the sludge is in the final stages of drying. Concentrations of Swallows feeding over the drying beds are common at migration times but few House Martins and no Sand Martins join them. Very few hirundines are ever observed feeding over the sludge lagoons.

(c) *Waste Ground.* Immediately to the north of the toll road and between the works area and the southern lagoons lie two areas of rough waste ground. For most part these areas are covered with grasses, Common Orache (*Atriplex patula*), Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Docks (*Rumex obtusifolius* and *R. crispus*), and other common weeds of waste ground. Parts of the waste areas are bare gravel strips on poor quality clay where small pools of water lie throughout the year. Many birds come to drink at these pools during the summer months. It is remarkable that with all the large effluent lagoons nearby birds should come in flocks to drink at a few selected stagnant pools. From late summer to October Goldfinches and Linnets are particularly common in this habitat and they join the pipits, wagtails and Starlings which are the other numerous species that come to drink at the pools. White-throats and Reed Buntings nest in the docks and such like. In winter enormous flocks consisting mainly of Starlings Greenfinches, Chaffinches, House and Tree Sparrows feed on the waste ground together with smaller numbers of Skylarks, Meadow Pipits and Pied Wagtails. The dried grit, containing barley, etc., is deposited on certain areas of waste ground and the feeding finches and sparrows will often concentrate on the small heaps



where they appear to find food quite easily. At migration times Wheat-ears, Skylarks, some pipits and wagtails, and finches congregate around this habitat.

Small mammals, including the Harvest Mouse (*Micromys minutus*), are particularly abundant here and are preyed on by Kestrels and Owls.

(d) *The Water Meadows.* These are typical of their type in the Lea Valley and a more detailed description of such habitat has already been given by the author (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, in press). The two such meadows which are part of the subject of this sub-section lie to the east of the north lagoons. In winter they are saturated and at times of very wet weather are subject to flooding. It is only when such floods are present that Great Black-backed Gulls are regular visitors to Rye Meads and then only in small numbers. Unlike all the other gulls which visit Rye Meads in the winter and which roost on the Lea Valley Reservoirs the Great Black-backed Gulls have been noted to fly off eastwards in the mid-afternoon and are presumed to roost on the Essex coast. The attraction of flood water to Great Black-backed Gulls has been noted by the author in other parts of the Lea Valley. Lapwing, Snipe and Woodpigeons are present in large numbers in the winter months together with smaller numbers of Herons, Jack Snipe, Skylarks, and Meadow Pipits. The flocks of Golden Plover which roam the Lea Valley in winter are regular visitors. In spring large flocks of migrant Lapwings and Fieldfares, and numbers of feeding Rooks from nearby colonies, are regular on the meadows.

In summer the meadows are reasonably dry although the water table is only a matter of inches below the surface. Redshank usually reappear in late February and together with Snipe, Yellow Wagtails and Reed Buntings nest in the clumps of juncus grass (*juncus* sp.) which do not exist in the southern of the two meadows where a hay crop is still gathered. A few Lapwing nest, but the Whinchat which was once a common bird of such habitats in the Lea Valley has disappeared in the last two years. The reason for the latter's disappearance from this stable grassland habitat is unknown.

(e) *The Works and Plant.* Excepting the sludge tanks, already described, the buildings and plant occupy a rectangular site extending lengthwise along the south side of the toll road from the eastern boundary to the waste ground close to the south lagoons. Apart from providing nest sites for the inevitable Starlings and House Sparrows the only ornithological importance of this habitat is its use as a roost by Pied Wagtails during the winter months. As many as 400 Wagtails come to roost on occasion, and there is observational and ringing evidence that they disperse to feed over at least a seven mile radius. The birds return in the late afternoon or evening when they gather on the grass and gravel surrounds of the circular Final Settling Tanks. In the last light the birds fly to roost on girders only 18" above the effluent and underneath the catwalk on the slowly rotating structures which operate the scrapers. The whole area is floodlit at night but this does not appear to effect the birds.

(f) *Hedgerows and Trees.* There are two large and important hedgerows at Rye Meads consisting mainly of Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) to a height of about ten feet and interspersed with taller growths of Willows. One of these hedges is "L" shaped and is situated on waste ground at the southern end of the site. The other grows over a ditch along the north side of a grass covered flood bank which together separate the northern waste ground from the water meadows. Aged and heavily crevassed Willows and Hawthorn occur along the east and particularly the north sides of the northern effluent lagoons. Tall stands of Elm (*Ulmus procera*) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) border the east and south sides of the southern lagoons respectively and are remnants of the vegetation of much earlier times.

The trees provide nest sites for Carrion Crows, tits, Tree Sparrows and the occasional pair of Kestrels. Woodpigeons, thrushes, Dunnocks, and finches nest in the hedges, and Robins and the occasional Willow Warblers in the vegetation at their base.

No roosts exist in these hedgerows, which teem with thrushes, tits and warblers at migration times. The absence of Yellowhammers and Corn Buntings is worth mentioning. These were of rare occurrence at Rye Meads until the winter of 1961/62, when a small roost containing about 30 of each species developed in a hedgerow just outside the study area. However by late March, 1962, they had moved away.

(g) *Ditches.* The final habitat remaining to be described is a wide ditch which passes along and around the perimeter of the effluent lagoon areas. In the southern lagoon area it passes along a gully with a dense vegetation of nettles, docks, etc., which habitat has already been described. Around the northern lagoons however it provides a very rich, stable, and different habitat, which dates at least before the original sewage farm. Great Hairy Willowherb, Reed-Grass, Sedges, Docks (especially Great Water Dock, *R. hydrolapathum*) and Willows form the fringe vegetation. Great Water Plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), Water Starwort (*Callitriche* spp.), stands of Reedmace (*Typha latifolia*), and particularly the Reed (*Phragmites communis*) are abundant forms in the ditch itself. Here is the most densely populated habitat of all during the breeding season housing Reed Warblers, Sedge Warblers and Reed Buntings in particular; the former being frequently parasitized by Cuckoos. Moorhens and possibly Water Rails nest here also, and in winter when the vegetation is dead and naturally flattened these are particularly numerous. In the winter of 1961/62 a roost of several hundred Reed Buntings developed in the reeds, the birds apparently dispersing over a large area to feed during the day. Prior to this very few Reed Buntings wintered at Rye Meads.

## (5) **Migration**

Considerable data has been amassed on this subject but only a brief account of the more general pattern is possible here. Migration is varyingly governed by weather conditions according to season, and the species involved, and it can be shown that the principles governing such controls,

which have been well documented in general works on this subject, apply to migration at Rye Meads. Hence, with the exception of certain local differences, a discussion on any correlation between migration and the weather has been omitted from this paper.

From the migration viewpoint Rye Meads is an area of attractive habitats and abundant food supplies ideally situated on an important migration route, namely the Lea Valley. Aquatic species are attracted to the effluent lagoons and waders to the muddy areas when these exist. Many others, normally associated with different habitats, are presumably drawn by the abundance of food although there is reason to believe that many "non aquatic" passerines are at least partly attracted by water. Around dawn, newly arrived warblers are often found in the ground vegetation bordering the effluent lagoons, although they soon disperse into nearby hedgerows and trees. Song Thrushes, Blackbirds, Robins and Dunnocks are others often noted for this habit although they do not always disperse but often remain on the lagoon banks throughout the day.

In considering the possible attraction of water one remembers the variety of "untypical" species regularly recorded at gravel pits, reservoirs, etc., at migration times.

As might be expected the retrapping of ringed birds shows that migrants tend to remain for longer periods in the autumn than in the spring, when their passage periods are shorter.

Species such as gulls, Swifts, hirundines, pipits and wagtails which are reputed to follow physical features such as river valleys, are among the more numerous migrant species to occur at Rye Meads. All of these are diurnal migrants in both spring and autumn although Swifts, pipits and wagtails also move at night.

Gibbs, and Wallace (*London Bird Report*, 1960, p. 61) have described excellently the vast diurnal movements that occur on a broad front over the London Area in the autumn, and the general pattern is a fair illustration of the same movements over Rye Meads. However, under certain conditions westbound migrants tend to concentrate along the Stort Valley and at times of winds, however light, from the northern quarter the same migrants on reaching the Lea Valley turn northward, only resuming their westward direction in the vicinity of Ware where the river bends in that direction. Fieldfares are the only numerous species in these movements never observed to adopt such tactics although an equally large species, the Lapwing, does so regularly. Most surprising are northerly diurnal passages of Swallows which occur frequently in autumn. More work is necessary before possible causes of this reverse migration can be reasonably expressed.

The migratory characters of the various species which occur at Rye Meads have been accurately documented in general text books and it only remains to detail a few striking and surprising aspects of the regular migrations at Rye Meads, which have not already been mentioned.

Large flocks of migrant Reed Buntings occur in the latter part of March. These flocks normally contain over 90% of males and are not followed by a compensating passage of females as in the case of the Yellow



Wagtail. Table II gives the numbers and sexes of Reed Buntings at Rye Meads in March and early April, 1961. At least thirty pairs nested at Rye Meads in that year but the breeding population does not return until mid-April, as the figure for the 9th of that month indicates.

TABLE II

NUMBERS AND PROPORTIONS OF EACH SEX OF REED BUNTINGS AT RYE MEADS IN MARCH AND EARLY APRIL, 1961

Character	Date									
	5/3	11/3	14/3	18/3	19/3	23/3	25/3	30/3	8/4	9/4
Total present	17	53	70	200	250	70	100	120	60	23
Number of females	5	7	6	14	19	8	9	9	7	11
Percentage of females	29	13	9	7	8	11	9	8	12	48

Small numbers of Wheatears of the Greenland form occur regularly in late April and May. Turtle Doves are common on both spring and autumn passage, which is surprising for a species whose immigration and exodus is through the S.W. of Britain. In autumn Turtle Doves come down the Lea Valley and frequently leave it in the Rye Meads area on a W.S.W. heading. Such a heading would eventually enable them to join the stream of that species which passes along the Chilterns.

Linnets and Goldfinches become particularly numerous in July, often totalling as many as 1,000, and remain so until October. A well-marked passage of Warblers begins in July also, when Whitethroats are especially numerous.

The last half of October and first half of November regularly see a large passage of Blackbirds which mainly arrive and depart at night. The figures obtained over the last five autumns show a strong trend for the males to pass before the females. Analysis of birds sexed when being ringed during this period shows similar trends. Fieldfares, Song Thrushes and Redwings are also numerous at this time but Mistle Thrushes are rare. Table III shows the numbers of Blackbirds present on selected dates in the autumn of 1960.

TABLE III

NUMBERS OF BLACKBIRDS AT RYE MEADS ON SELECTED DATES IN THE AUTUMN OF 1960

Date						
16/10	22/10	23/10	29/10	5/11	12/11	26/11
15	c. 50	c. 400	c. 250	c. 150	c. 70	c. 20

The last thing to be mentioned here is the large diurnal passage of Corvidae which pass S. and S.W. in the first half of November in each year. Flocks totalling several hundreds of Rooks with smaller numbers of Jackdaws may pass all day. Flocks of Carrion Crows are also frequent and this species has never been recorded on passage in the company of its cousins. When considering the origin of these corvidae it is worth mentioning that despite careful observation no Hooded Crows have been observed at the time.

**(6) Predators**

Apart from Kestrels and Owls, Carrion Crows and the occasional marauding Jays and Magpies are the principal avian predators. Carrion Crows account for many clutches of ground nesting species, especially ducks. Sparrowhawks have been rare since 1957 but the reasons are almost certainly external ones.

Rats (*Rattus* spp.), Weasels (*Mustela nivalis*) and Stoats (*M. erminea*) are excessively abundant and there are normally two or three Foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) in the area. The number of birds which fall prey to these mammals is unknown but there is reason to believe that it is considerable.

**(7) Bird Ringing and Other Studies**

In 1960, B. S. Nau, E. J. Stokes and the author began catching and ringing birds at Rye Meads with the eventual view of furthering the studies there by establishing a bird ringing organization. It was not until bird ringing had begun that the tremendous potential of Rye Meads as a study centre was fully realized. With the kind permission of the Chief Engineer, Mr. E. A. Drew, a laboratory hut was constructed in August, 1961, where birds can be weighed, ringed, measured and examined. This hut is equipped with necessary apparatus and reference books and provides an essential base for operations generally. Record keeping and the general organization is similar to that at the official observatories.

The Rye Meads Ringing Group was officially founded on 1st January, 1962, and is responsible for the organization of work on the natural history of Rye Meads. Its objects are "to study and ring birds at Rye Meads and also to further studies of other aspects of its natural history". In addition to birds, members are currently working on Beetles (*Coleoptera*), Bugs (*Hemiptera—Heteroptera*), Mammals (*Mammalia*), and Dragonflies (*Odonata*).

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(10) **List of Species**

The following list includes all those 167 forms known to have occurred at Rye Meads between the 1st January, 1957, and 30th June, 1962. It is arranged in the Wetmore Order except that the Yellow Wagtail appears before the Pied Wagtail. Numbers in brackets represent the number of breeding pairs of the species concerned on the basis of the 1961 survey, and an asterisk indicates those species which have occurred less than ten times. The scientific names of the species mentioned can be found in the *Check List of the Birds of Great Britain and Ireland*, published by the British Ornithologists' Union, London, 1952.

Black-throated Diver*	Merlin*
Great Crested Grebe	Kestrel
Slavonian Grebe*	Red-legged Partridge (2 +)
Black-necked Grebe*	Partridge (2 +)
Little Grebe (13)	Pheasant (8)
Cormorant*	Water Rail (1)
Shag	Moorhen (16 +)
Heron	Coot (15)
Bittern*	Lapwing (2)
Mallard (20)	Ringed Plover
Teal	Little Ringed Plover (1)
Garganey	Grey Plover*
Gadwall*	Golden Plover
Wigeon	Turnstone*
Pintail*	Snipe (8)
Shoveler (1)	Great Snipe*
Red-crested Pochard*	Jack Snipe
Scaup	Curlew
Tufted Duck (8)	Whimbrel*
Pochard	Green Sandpiper
Goldeneye	Wood Sandpiper
Common Scoter	Common Sandpiper
Goosander*	Redshank (5)
Smew*	Spotted Redshank*
Shelduck*	Greenshank
White-fronted Goose*	Knot*
Canada Goose*	Little Stint*
Mute Swan (1)	Temmincks Stint*
Bewick's Swan*	Pectoral Sandpiper*
Buzzard*	Dunlin
Sparrowhawk*	Curlew Sandpiper*
Hobby*	Sanderling*
Peregrine*	Broad-billed Sandpiper*

Ruff	Redwing
Grey Phalarope*	Blackbird (12)
Red-necked Phalarope*	Wheatear
Stone Curlew*	Stonechat
Great Black-backed Gull	Whinchat
Herring Gull	Redstart*
Common Gull	Black Redstart*
Little Gull*	Robin (5)
Black-headed Gull	Grasshopper Warbler*
Black Tern	Reed Warbler (11)
Common Tern	Marsh Warbler (5)
Stock Dove (1)	Sedge Warbler (34)
Woodpigeon (1)	Melodious Warbler*
Turtle Dove	Blackcap
Collared Dove +	Garden Warbler (1)
Cuckoo (2)	Whitethroat (2)
Barn Owl	Lesser Whitethroat
Little Owl (1)	Willow Warbler (2)
Tawny Owl (1)	Chiffchaff (1)
Short-eared Owl*	Goldcrest*
Swift	Firecrest*
Kingfisher (1)	Spotted Flycatcher
Green Woodpecker	Pied Flycatcher*
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Dunnock (8)
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker*	Meadow Pipit (5)
Wryneck*	Tree Pipit
Woodlark*	Rock Pipit*
Skylark (9)	Water Pipit*
Swallow (2)	Yellow Wagtail (8)
House Martin	Blue-headed Wagtail
Sand Martin	Pied Wagtail (2)
Carrion Crow (3)	White Wagtail
Hooded Crow*	Grey Wagtail
Rook	Great Grey Shrike*
Jackdaw	Starling (13)
Magpie	Greenfinch (4)
Jay	Goldfinch (2)
Great Tit (1)	Siskin
Blue Tit (2)	Linnet (2 +)
Coal Tit*	Twite*
Marsh Tit*	Redpoll
Willow Tit	Bullfinch (2)
Long-tailed Tit	Chaffinch (3)
Bearded Tit*	Brambling
Nuthatch	Yellowhammer
Treecreeper	Corn Bunting
Wren (4 +)	Reed Bunting (c. 30)
Mistle Thrush	Snow Bunting*
Fieldfare	House Sparrow (?)
Song Thrush (10)	Tree Sparrow (15)

*Addendum.*—A Black-tailed Godwit on July 15th, a Nightingale on August 5th and Wood Warbler on August 18th, 1962, brought the total number of forms to have occurred since 1957 to 170.

## The Census of Mute Swans, 1961

By STANLEY CRAMP

### Summary

A repeat census of Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*) was made in the London area in 1961. 181 nests were reported, compared with 188 in 1956 and 173 in 1955, and the general pattern of distribution was little changed compared with the earlier years. The numbers of non-breeding birds showed a definite decline, with 867, against 955 in 1956.

### Introduction

In 1961, the Nature Conservancy invited the Wildfowl Trust to carry out a scientific investigation into the numbers and biology of the Mute Swan, including a ground census, in co-operation with the British Trust for Ornithology, of the London area and twelve English and Scottish counties. The results of this ground census, together with details of aerial counts, have been published elsewhere (Eltringham, in press), but it seems desirable to give fuller details of this third census of the species in the London area, for comparison with the earlier results (Cramp, 1957). In 1955, most of the reports came from members of the public, whereas in 1956 and 1961 reliance was placed on the ornithological network; the area being divided into sections, with selected observers being responsible for surveying all suitable waters in their section, aided by a knowledge of the nest sites reported in earlier years.

### Nests

The nests reported in the London area in each of the three years were distributed as follows:—

	1955	1956	1961
Middlesex ... ..	80	81	65
Surrey ... ..	31	34	38
Hertfordshire ... ..	21	18	31
Essex ... ..	19	34	25
Kent ... ..	14	16	17
Buckinghamshire ... ..	8	5	5
Totals ... ..	173	188	181

The figures for reported nests for the three years are remarkably similar although it should be noted that the two census methods used are subject to rather different errors. In 1955, when reports came from the general public nests in more rural areas and on sites such as gravel pits were more likely to have been missed, whereas in 1956 and 1961 the coverage was probably more complete, but most observers were not able to make more than one visit to any particular water, so that some of the pairs

reported as holding territory but not breeding may have nested and failed before the visit or built later. And even in 1956 and 1961 it was not possible to visit all suitable waters (though the number missed is not thought to have exceeded 5% of the total); indeed, it is now known that 4 nests on the R. Lea, in Hertfordshire, were not recorded in 1956, so that the corrected total for that year is 192. However, in view of possible omissions in 1961 also, it is safer to conclude that the number of nesting pairs in the last five years has declined only slightly, if at all; this approximate stability was also found in the national census as a whole (Eltringham, *loc. cit.*).

In the earlier report a map was given showing the distribution of all the known nests in the area. This has not been repeated, as the general pattern in 1961 was little changed. In all three years, most of the nests were found along rivers (59 in 1955, 65 (now corrected to 69) in 1956, and 62 in 1961), or on lakes and ponds in parks, commons and other public open spaces (58, 51 and 51 respectively). In the more complete surveys in 1956 and 1961 gravel pits were the next most popular site (36 in both years, compared with 22 in 1955), followed by other lakes and ponds (24 in 1955, 21 in 1956 and 15 in 1961), reservoirs (4, 10 and 8 respectively), canals (3, 4 and 6) and disused quarries (2, 1 and 1). In 1961 two nests were reported from sewage farms. As in the earlier years, most of the river nests in 1961 were found along the Thames (30), followed by the Colne and Lea (9 each) and the Mole (3). So in all three years, the nests in the area were concentrated mainly along the valleys of the Thames, Colne and Lea, either on the banks or on islands of these rivers or on nearby gravel pits and lakes, with considerable numbers also in the built-up areas, on lakes and ponds in public parks, commons etc. Yet the Thames, over the greater part of its length in the area was in 1961 again devoid of nests (from Hammersmith to Swanscombe), presumably owing to the lack of suitable sites, for, as is shown later, there are still large numbers of non-breeding birds in this part, some of which, at least, appear to be fully adult. They include birds which were pinioned when young during the annual swan-upping and so cannot readily move away from the Thames and its tributaries. The pressure on nesting sites was vividly illustrated in 1961 when no less than 7 pairs nested, without success, on Chiswick Eyot, a relatively small island, easily accessible from the bank at low tide. Elsewhere in the area, however, shortage of nesting sites does not appear to have been a limiting factor, for of the 157 sites used in 1956 which were visited again in 1961 and still appeared to be suitable no less than 59 held no swans at all.

### **Non-breeding Birds**

In 1955 it was not possible to make a full census of non-breeding swans, but in 1956 counts revealed 955, including 744 on the Thames and 211 elsewhere. In 1961, the Thames was again covered along its entire length, by boat or from the bank, and a considerable fall was found in the number of non-breeding birds—427 (403 plus 12 pairs holding territories but not nesting). The decline was found in all stretches, but was most marked in the urban and suburban reaches, thus Greenwich to Westminster had 39

in 1961 and 59 in 1956, Westminster to Kew 214 and 408 respectively, Kew to Hampton Court 63 and 149 and Hampton Court to Staines 109 and 128. As in the earlier years, most of these birds were in large flocks, concentrated at favourite feeding places, such as rubbish barges in the urban reaches or at places such as Staines, Richmond and the South Bank, where they are regularly fed by the public.

On the other hand, the non-breeding birds elsewhere in the area showed an increase, with 440 (including 44 pairs holding territories) against 211 in 1956. They included many odd birds, pairs and small parties, and a few large herds, with 21 at St. Albans, 33 at Walthamstow reservoirs, and 70 on a walled-in area on Rainham Marsh used for dumping sludge, where such concentrations are quite new.

The total of non-breeding birds, therefore, shows a marked fall from 955 to 867 in the last five years, and the real decline may have been even greater for some areas (e.g. the Lea valley, the Middlesex canals etc., which held some 80 birds in 1961) were not so fully covered in 1956. It is worth remembering, however, that in December 1956, after the census, when an oil barge sank at Battersea, 243 swans on the Thames are known to have died (*London Bird Report for 1956*, page 15).

### **Breeding Success**

Details obtained during the 1955 and 1956 counts showed the wide range in clutch and brood sizes (2 to 8 and 1 to 10 respectively) found in this species. This was also found in 1961 (with clutches 3 to 9, and brood sizes 1 to 9), but as so many nests were visited only once, the information obtained is insufficient to justify a detailed analysis, except in the case of numbers of young hatched, where details of 88 broods are available. They produced 273 young, or 3.1 young per pair, or 4.8 young per pair if complete failures are excluded (compared with 4.0 and 4.8 young respectively in 1956).

### **Acknowledgments**

The census was possible only because of the help of many observers, who in most cases undertook the arduous task of surveying large areas, and grateful thanks are due to: R. S. Allen, A. Anderson, L. Baker, R. E. S. Ballard, R. C. Boynes, R. Britton, J. Brock, Mrs. W. R. Brocklebank, Miss E. P. Brown, J. A. Burton, H. B. Camplin, C. E. J. Carter, Miss M. Chaplin, Cheshunt Grammar School Field Club, Mrs. J. Coxhead, E. C. Dickinson, Brian Edwards, J. Field, R. W. George, T. W. Gladwin, A. E. Goodall, Miss E. M. Goom, H. F. Greenfield, G. H. Gush, D. G. Harris, J. Graham Harvey, B. Hasler, F. J. Holroyde, R. Hudson, Mrs. Q. Hurrell, A. M. Hutson, I. G. Johnson, K. R. Jones, F. Lancaster, J. D. Magee, Miss Marshall, R. H. May, P. R. Maynard, W. H. Melluish, P. D. Moat, B. S. Nau, E. G. Philp, B. A. Richards, R. C. Righelato, J. J. O. Roebuck, R. L. Rolfe, B. L. Sage, R. F. Sanderson, L. Selzer, S. Shippey, G. Simpson, Mrs. L. M. P. Small, S. D. G. Stephens, W. G. Teagle, M. Thain, E. H. Warrington, J. J. Walling, D. I. M. Wallace, A. C. Wheeler and Miss D. E. Woods.

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## The Bird Population of Rubbish Dumps

By A. GIBBS

### Introduction

The object of this survey was to assess the use made by birds of the rubbish dumps that occur quite commonly in the London Area.

During the period of the survey (about 3 years), over 30 dumps were reported. Many were small and the unusual habitat was obviously not of a sufficient size to have much influence on bird life. Others were recorded as a location only, and no details were given either of size or the birds present (see Table 2).

It was decided to concentrate observations on dumps where observers could be found who were willing to make regular visits. Despite the mud, smell, and the presence of watch dogs and "ribald dustmen", a fair number of observations were made and the ensuing report is mainly based on records from the following dumps:—

Charlton, Fairlop, Hendon (see Table 3), Holwell Hyde, Leatherhead, Lodge Hollow, Pratt's Bottom, Ripple Level and Walton.

Table 1 gives some brief particulars of these dumps, which are fairly representative of the range of sizes and types that occur in the London Area.

### Description

Throughout the predominantly urban areas of London, most of the vast quantity of household and industrial refuse that is "produced" is deposited, perhaps after sorting and processing, on to waste ground. This dumping area often consists of old and probably flooded gravel diggings or rough ground which is low lying or marshy. The accumulation of rubbish raises the level of the dump considerably above the level of its surroundings and thus alters its drainage and other characteristics. The final product after sealing with earth, may be sown with grass to form sports fields or it may be built on.

The dumping areas contain various proportions of the following habitats:

(1) The original type of ground i.e. rough pasture, gravel diggings with deep open water, boggy marshland etc.; all include some bushes or scrub and trees.

(2) Layers of old dumped refuse of industrial character such as ashes, soot, builders' rubble, earth, etc. that has become thickly coated with natural vegetation.

(3) Relatively bare, open areas of "spoil", not overgrown with plants and containing little of an obviously edible nature but providing a resting ground for gulls.

(4) Buildings containing incinerators or refuse processing machinery and sorting sheds.

(5) Domestic and light industrial rubbish fresh from the collectors' lorries—often in the process of being burnt. The constituents include: cardboard boxes, paper, bottles, tins, stale bread, etc. Both gulls and Crows were seen to fly deliberately inside the smoke-clouds.

(6) Mounds of freshly "minced" domestic rubbish containing ashes, vegetable peelings, glass, small broken plastic items, etc. that appear to have passed through a coarse sieve.

(7) Areas of shallow water, often hemmed in by high banks of rubbish; sometimes these are quite extensive but usually they may be classed as puddles or flooded ruts.

The size of the dumps varies enormously. At one extreme, there may be no more than a pile of old tin cans in the corner of a field, and at the other about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  square miles of dumping area of which, however, perhaps only an area of 100 yards by 200 yards may be in active use at any one time.

### The Birds

The most frequent visitors to the rubbish dumps are: gulls, Corvidae, House Sparrows, Starlings, Feral Pigeons, Kestrels and Pied Wagtails.

All, except the Wagtails and Kestrels, are very much attracted by the food that is obviously available among the household refuse. The lorries carrying either the raw kitchen scraps, or the processed ex-dustbin contents, are often followed by Black-headed Gulls until they are emptied and the mounds so produced are then very actively turned over, scratched up, and generally ransacked for food. What food is found in the processed refuse is not apparent as the appearance of the fresh refuse is not noticeably different from that which has been lying about for weeks!

The raw domestic rubbish is also eagerly examined and stale bread, food remaining in tins and probably also maggots are eaten. Gulls were recorded eating even paper wrappings.

The most active feeding occurs on the mounds of processed domestic refuse; many hundreds of Starlings, Sparrows, Corvidae, Feral Pigeons and gulls may be seen packed tightly into a small area, frantically scratching and pecking about like Domestic Hens.

The main attraction for the birds at these dumps is food and the habitats listed 5 and 6 above provide it for the largest numbers.

The other habitats listed each support some birds including almost all those breeding in the area of the dumps. These are appropriate to the terrain and appear to be little affected by the proximity of the dumped refuse. The open, rather barren areas, are used as resting places by the gulls as they are relatively rarely disturbed. In addition, the buildings provide important perching places for all the birds when they are forced to leave the ground. Their roofs are particularly used in the early morning or in frosty weather when the birds are hungry, enabling them to resume foraging as soon as the disturbance ceases. Gulls sometimes rest on the larger sheets of water and wagtails run round the puddles, but apart from drinking and bathing, the pools attract only a few other species, such as the occasional wader, swan or duck.

Dealing with the gulls first, all the common species are found on the dumps, the most numerous being the Black-headed Gull during the winter. Up to 4,000 of these were recorded at Holwell Hyde, 1,400 at Walton, 1,200 at Hendon, 1,000 at Fairlop, 700 at Lodge Hollow and 500 at Charlton. Smaller parties were reported from almost all the tips and also feeding from the litter around the lorries in a fish distribution yard near Finsbury Park. At Camberwell, household refuse is tipped into open topped barges and these are then taken down the Thames to be emptied. This operation attracts large parties of gulls, and about 850 Black-headed Gulls were recorded on one day in February.

Lesser Black-backed Gulls also occurred commonly in every month except May at these tips, the largest numbers being seen between July and October although there were 300 at Hendon in February. The maxima recorded were: 1,000 at Fairlop, 600 at Holwell Hyde and 300 at Walton in August, 250 at Charlton in June and Fairlop in September, and 200 at Mitcham Common and Charlton in mid-winter. In September and October 1954 maxima of 400 were recorded at both the Ruislip Dumps and the one at Maple Corss.

Herring Gulls were most common in the autumn and winter with maxima of 1,000 at Fairlop in October, 340 at Epsom in February, 2-300 at Holwell Hyde, 200 at Lower Kingswood and 170 at Walton.

Common Gulls appeared as a small proportion of most gull flocks and sometimes in larger numbers during the winter. Parties of 500 were recorded at Holwell Hyde, 350 at Walton and 250 feeding from the rubbish barges at Camberwell.

Great Black-backed Gulls were less common but there were 200 at Walton in December and the hundred or so at Holwell Hyde during the winter months made up quite a large proportion of the "local" population.

The gull numbers at the dumps are extremely variable, being much affected by the amount of disturbance. Upon being flushed, the gulls usually fly off to nearby buildings, sports grounds or reservoirs. Parties frequently fly back to see whether they may safely return. Many visits to the tips revealed few birds and in general, upon the arrival of the observer, what birds there were would often depart before counting could be completed.

The Corvidae also made good use of the rubbish tips. The proportion of Crows, Rooks, and Jackdaws were also very variable, depending often on adjacent feeding areas. Many birds however, apparently came from roosts some miles away. Up to 250 Carrion Crows and 150 Jackdaws used the Charlton Tip and appeared to make it a regular feeding ground especially in the early morning. They spent most of the rest of the day on a large field nearby. The Hendon Dump supported 60-80 Crows and 70 Rooks with more Rooks appearing during the spring to give a maximum of 130. The resident birds flew in daily from Mill Hill over 3 miles away. The Leatherhead Tip which is sited among arable fields, also provided food for a large Rook population, up to 250 being seen there in the summer. The Hertfordshire dumps provided a good food source

for hundreds of Crows and Rooks. Only at Charlton were Jackdaws numerous.

Feral Pigeons occurred in large numbers at several tips notably Hendon where up to 300 were regularly seen. These birds fed at the tip, rested during the day on local buildings and roosted on the roof girders of the nearby Greyhound Stadium. A sudden reduction in their numbers, down to 3 in fact, was the result of the "punters'" complaints being acted on by the local pest control authorities. The numbers at the tip have since increased to nearly 100.

Starlings and House Sparrows both make good use of the abundant food supply at the dumps. They burrow about actively among the refuse and also inhabit the regions of coarse vegetation, searching for seeds and insects. They occur in fair numbers throughout the year at all the tips and are particularly numerous in the summer.

Another typical bird is the Pied Wagtail and after wet weather in particular, the numbers even at a small tip frequently reach double figures. Apart from feeding on the mounds of fresh refuse, they were found all over the dumps amongst the heaps of old rubbish and wherever there were puddles. The largest numbers occurred during the autumn.

The dumps also support large populations of rodents, rats especially. Kestrels were recorded from almost all the dumps, with Short-eared Owls as well at Ripple Level where there is also a large area of suitable rough ground.

Tree Sparrows and finches often occur, particularly during the winter months, both on the refuse and among the weed covered areas. Up to 100 Tree Sparrows were recorded at Hendon. The common finches were Chaffinches in modest numbers at most tips, Linnets in large flocks at Fairlop, and smaller numbers of Goldfinches, Greenfinches and Bramblings generally.

Small numbers of many other species were recorded. Blue, Great and Long-tailed Tits were seen feeding off the rubbish, Yellow Wagtails, which bred at Ripple Level, and Grey Wagtails, which bred at Fairlop, were seen at most of the larger tips. Skylarks, and Meadow Pipits occurred in small parties at some of the dumps that provided both rubbish mounds and rather bare, weed covered areas. Other birds seen were a few Wood Pigeons, Wheatears, Whinchats and Stonechats. A flock of Bullfinches, two Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, several Hooded Crows and Glaucous Gulls were reported feeding on the ground among mounds of refuse. At Hendon, a Common Sandpiper, several Mallard and a Swan were recorded at a small pool. The continuous frosts in winter forced Blackbirds and Thrushes to seek food on the open mounds; they were normally to be found only in the more overgrown and bushy areas. Magpies and Jays came down cautiously from the nearby woodland to scavenge among the rubbish at the tip at Pratt's Bottom. At Charlton, which borders on a deep lake, Coots and Moorhens were several times seen to be feeding on the tip. Many other species of reasonably common birds were recorded, especially in the overgrown parts of the dumping grounds during autumn and spring.

I should like to thank most heartily the following persons whose observations, often in unattractive places have made this paper possible:—

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TABLE 1

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SEVERAL TYPICAL DUMPS IS GIVEN WITH A NATIONAL GRID MAP REFERENCE

CHARLTON (M) TQ.085682	100 × 400 yards plus. Old, wet gravel diggings being filled in. Near to many reservoirs including Queen Mary, Littleton, which is a large gull roost.
FAIRLOP (E) TQ.455905	120 × 180 yards. Old, wet gravel diggings among wasteland next to airfield.
HENDON (M) TQ.232875	200 × 400 yards. Rough ground, small pool and some bushes. Tall buildings. Near to extensive sports fields and Brent Reservoir.
HOLWELL HYDE (H) TL.270110	Nearly 1 square mile. Was gravel pits, fairly dry, in mixed woodland and arable.
LEATHERHEAD (S) TQ.147578	Small, among water meadows next to sewage disposal works.
LODGE HOLLOW (H) TL.360080. Hoddesdon	Old fairly dry gravel diggings in mixed woodland.
PRATT'S BOTTOM (K) TQ.475610. Orpington	100 × 100 yards. A rough pasture valley in mixed woodland.
RIPPLE LEVEL (E) TQ.460825. Barking	1½ sq. miles plus, including ½ sq. mile of active tip. Beside Thames, ex rough pasture with wet ditches and pools.
WALTON (S) TQ.106678	400 × 800 yards plus. Old gravel diggings in rough ground. Next to Thames and near to many reservoirs.

TABLE 2

IN ADDITION TO THOSE LISTED IN TABLE 1, RUBBISH DUMPS WERE ALSO REPORTED FROM THE FOLLOWING PLACES:

<b>Bucks.</b>	Maple Cross, Uxbridge.
<b>Essex</b>	Barking, Hornchurch, Rainham, Romford, Thurrock, Walthamstow.
<b>Kent</b>	Longfield, Plumstead.
<b>Middx.</b>	Brent Reservoir (2), Hounslow, Mill Hill, Park Royal, Perivale, Ruislip (2).
<b>Surrey</b>	Epsom, Ham, Kingston, Lower Kingswood, Mitcham Common, Stoke D'Abernon, Thorpe (Laleham), West Molesey.
<b>Herts.</b>	Broxbourne, Little Amwell, Nazeing, Watford (Croxley Green).

TABLE 3

GULL COUNTS AT HENDON RUBBISH DUMP  
APPROXIMATE NUMBERS

<b>January</b>					<i>16.61</i>	<i>13.62</i>			
Black-headed Gull	...	...	...	...	250	1,200			
Herring Gull	...	...	...	...	0	50			
Common Gull	...	...	...	...	0	50			
Great Black-backed Gull	...	...	...	...	0	0			
Lesser Black-backed Gull	...	...	...	...	0	0			
<b>February</b>					<i>11.61</i>	<i>26.61</i>	<i>4.62</i>	<i>23.62</i>	
Black-headed Gull	...	...	...	...	300	125	500	450	
Herring Gull	...	...	...	...	0	10	100	50	
Common Gull	...	...	...	...	0	15	30	20	
Great Black-backed Gull	...	...	...	...	0	0	0	1	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	...	...	...	...	300	2	1	2	
<b>March</b>					<i>12.61</i>	<i>19.61</i>	<i>27.61</i>		
Black-headed Gull	...	...	...	...	20	10	0		
Herring Gull	...	...	...	...	1	30	0		
Common Gull	...	...	...	...	1	10	0		
Great Black-backed Gull	...	...	...	...	0	0	0		
Lesser Black-backed Gull	...	...	...	...	1	100	100		
<b>April</b>						<i>3.61</i>	<i>14.62</i>		
Black-headed Gull	...	...	...	...		0			
Herring Gull	...	...	...	...		0	*		
Common Gull	...	...	...	...		5			
Great Black-backed Gull	...	...	...	...		0			
Lesser Black-backed Gull	...	...	...	...		80	30*		
<b>May and June</b> —No counts.									
<b>July</b>						<i>17.60</i>	<i>15.62</i>		
Black-headed Gull	...	...	...	...		2	30		
Herring Gull	...	...	...	...		0	0		
Common Gull	...	...	...	...		0	2		
Great Black-backed Gull	...	...	...	...		0	0		
Lesser Black-backed Gull	...	...	...	...		40	150		
<b>August</b>					<i>14.60</i>	<i>21.60</i>	<i>11.62</i>		
Black-headed Gull	...	...	...	...	3	2	70		
Herring Gull	...	...	...	...	0	*	0		
Common Gull	...	...	...	...	0	0	0		
Great Black-backed Gull	...	...	...	...	0	0	0		
Lesser Black-backed Gull	...	...	...	...	30	12*	70		
<b>September</b>					<i>25.60</i>	<i>3.61</i>	<i>16.61</i>	<i>17.61</i>	<i>23.61</i>
Black-headed Gull	...	...	...	...	1	80	70	60	30
Herring Gull	...	...	...	...	0	1	2	0	0
Common Gull	...	...	...	...	0	1	3	0	0
Great Black-backed Gull	...	...	...	...	0	0	0	0	0
Lesser Black-backed Gull	...	...	...	...	175	150	120	100	100
<b>October</b>						<i>18.59</i>	<i>23.60</i>		
Black-headed Gull	...	...	...	...		50	75		
Herring Gull	...	...	...	...		0	*		
Common Gull	...	...	...	...		0	5		
Great Black-backed Gull	...	...	...	...		0	0		
Lesser Black-backed Gull	...	...	...	...		11	200*		

<b>November</b>					<i>6.60</i>	<i>19.61</i>	<i>26.61</i>
Black-headed Gull ... ..					20	150	150
Herring Gull ... ..					28	1	60
Common Gull ... ..					5	5	22
Great Black-backed Gull ... ..					0	0	0
Lesser Black-backed Gull ... ..					180	1	30
<b>December</b>					<i>2.61</i>	<i>16.61</i>	<i>30.61</i>
Black-headed Gull ... ..					250	200	500
Herring Gull ... ..						*	50
Common Gull ... ..						0	25
Great Black-backed Gull ... ..					0	0	0
Lesser Black-backed Gull ... ..						10*	0

\*Indicates that the number given under Lesser Black-backed Gull is the total estimated in a mixed party of this species and the Herring Gull.

## Beddington Ringing Station

1961 was a year notable more for material changes and innovations at the ringing station itself than for remarkable ornithological events. In January substantial headquarters were acquired in the form of a roomy builder's hut, assembled and painted by members of the group. A comprehensive recording system was started and the official B.T.O. observatory logs are now used. During the year the group suffered the departure of P. J. Morgan, R. C. Righelato and B. S. Milne to various parts of the country and the opportunity is taken here to pay tribute to the enthusiasm and effort that the latter has put into the work of the station. Without Brian Milne there would have been no group effort at all and his work on the variant Yellow Wagtails has rightly received national recognition.

A total of 1,339 birds were ringed during the year, bringing the grand total in 1954-61 to nearly 13,000. Swifts again headed the list with 614 birds ringed, our second highest annual total. They also provide the most spectacular recoveries, from the French Pyrenees and Valencia in Spain. The overall recovery rate since ringing began is now between 2 and 3%. For the first time 144 nest record cards were completed for the B.T.O. Scheme.

Thanks are again due to the farm manager, Mr. E. Hodgson, B.Sc., M.Inst.S.P., and the group are grateful to him for allowing the work of the ringing station to continue.

S. D. G. STEPHENS.

### SELECTED RECOVERIES OF BIRDS IN 1961

<i>Ring No.</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Date ringed</i>	<i>Date and place recovered</i>
286646	Woodcock	24.9.59	14.1.61 Overton, Hants., 45m. W.S.W.
287224	Cuckoo	5.8.57	27.6.61 Stockport, Cheshire, 155m. N.W.
C98444	Swift	13.7.57	3.5.61 Artiege, Pyrenees, France
SC03043	Swift	11.6.61	20.8.61 Valencia, Spain
E49890	Hedge Sparrow	6.10.57	12.2.61 Kingswood, 8m. S.W.
98537	Pied Wagtail	1.7.61	8.9.61 Sevenoaks, 15m. S.E.
K24007	Yellow Wagtail	6.8.58	8.6.61 Northfleet, 19m. E.
94304	Yellow Wagtail	16.7.60	23.8.61 Molesey, 10m. W.
S43444	Starling	2.6.56	7.12.61 Wrotham, 20m. E.S.E.
R75767	Starling	29.5.60	12.4.61 Chislehurst, 10m. E.
32925X	Starling	29.5.60	16.2.61 Eltham, 10m. E.N.E.
V30952	Greenfinch	31.1.60	3.2.61 Kesgrove, Ipswich, 70m. N.E.
K25877	Chaffinch	16.1.60	17.12.61 Bishops Stortford, Essex, 35m. N.N.E.



## Short Notes

### Carrion Crows Attacking Starlings

Carrion crows were attacking and killing starlings as food for their young on the Recreation Close Playing Field, Mitcham, throughout the breeding season. The attacks started in April and continued until the young were independent, ceasing in July. They were carried out on flocks of feeding starlings and the following are descriptions of two such attacks:

On 28th April an adult crow flew about 20 feet above a small flock, a dozen or so, of peacefully feeding starlings. The crow without warning suddenly stooped on to the starlings which took off in a panic. The crow singled out one of the slower birds, beat it to the ground with its wings and then pounced on it and smashed it with its bill a few times to kill it. It then carried the dead starling in its bill to its nest. The flock of starlings mobbed the crow with no effect.

On 6th May an adult crow feeding among a starling flock pounced on one which came too near and carried it off.

R. S. BROWN.

*Note:* This attacking and killing of starlings took place again during the 1962 breeding season.

### Jays Breeding in Notting Hill

In the spring of 1961 a pair of Jays attempted to breed in Colville Gardens, Notting Hill. These gardens are in a densely populated area, are small, about 100 yards by 20 yards, and contain a few trees, mainly Limes and Hawthorn. The Jays first appeared on 11th April and by the 14th were building a nest in a Lime tree on a busy corner on a bus route. On one occasion string was carried to the nest. Twice they were seen to be feeding on green shoots and buds of Hawthorn and at this period they appeared to be missing in the afternoons and evenings.

When incubation started, about April 22nd, both birds took part. Courtship feeding took place at this time, the female reacting like Robins and Tits. The male appeared to give her grubs from the Hawthorn but by May 5th the male was flying into the top of a nearby Cherry tree and calling faintly as if to try and coax his mate off the nest, the female then flew off the nest and begged for food, and was fed, this food being, however, brought by the male in his cheek pouches. It was transferred from the beak to the toes and eaten Tit fashion.

I was away for a week from May 13th and when I returned on May 20th the Jays appeared to be feeding young, by May 22nd they were taking longer on their trips for food, by the 24th one Jay was still present but no attempt was being made to collect food and they were not seen subsequently.

R. BARKER.

## Nest of Willow Tit on Bookham Common

On May 14th, 1961, a nest hole of the Willow Tit *Parus atricapillus* was found by Jennifer Raven near the Isle of Wight pond on Bookham Common, Surrey (ref. 5799). Both birds were then feeding the young frequently on small caterpillars and removing faecal sacs and were still visiting the nest eight days later. On May 28th, however, the nest cavity was found broken open at the back and was empty. Large chips of wood were lying about and one of these was about 10 inches long. This seemed too large to have been hacked out by a Woodpecker and human interference appears perhaps more likely. The nest entrance was 3 feet 6 inches up from the ground in a small Willow about 15 feet high close to a small Oak. The hole was apparently a natural one and was  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches in diameter, the tree measuring about 5 inches across at this level. The trunk became rotten a few inches above the nest and it seems likely that the cavity had been enlarged by the Tits, many wood chips being found in the nest lining. The latter was examined with the help of C. P. Castell and J. Cooper and was found to consist mostly of fruits or seeds of Reed Mace *Typha latifolia* and fine wood chips. There were also some small feathers, a few very small pieces of bark and some fine dried vegetable fibres. A Dermestid Beetle (a scavenger) *Megatoma undata* was identified by M. Luff and several fleas of a species found commonly on passerine birds *Dasypsyllus gallinulae gallinulae* were identified by J. F. Harper.

The nest was perhaps unusual in two respects. Willow Tits commonly excavate their own nest cavity but here a natural hole had been used, although it had probably been enlarged by them: and the nest was lined with vegetable material instead of the more usual rabbit hair. Reed Mace grows on the Isle of Wight pond.

GEOFFREY BEVEN.

## Book Review

THE BIRDS OF SUFFOLK. William H. Payn. *Barrie & Rockliff*. London, 1962. 238 pages, coloured frontispiece, 10 photographic plates. Price 45s.

The late C. B. Ticehurst's *A History of the Birds of Suffolk* published in 1932, although a magnificent and comprehensive work has inevitably become out of date with the passing of thirty years. Mr. Payn's work is therefore timely and welcome as Suffolk with its 50 miles of coastline attracts an ever increasing number of visiting ornithologists each year, and an up to date summary of status and distribution is greatly needed.

This volume is well produced, clearly printed and admirably planned. The only major criticism is that the coloured plate, which must contribute much towards the relatively high cost, could well have been omitted in favour of a detailed map of the county. The preliminary sections of the book deal with the physical and topographical characteristics of Suffolk, agriculture, sewage farms, factory ponds, gravel pits, nature reserves, museums and collections, changes in the avifauna, and migration. Three ornithologists have each contributed a section on the coast and countryside 50 years ago. The major fact that emerges here is that whatever benefits may have accrued, the activities of the Forestry Commission and to a lesser extent the War Department on the Brecklands have largely destroyed a unique habitat that can never be replaced, and one cannot help thinking that this should never have been allowed. The systematic list is complete to the end of 1960 and deals quite comprehensively with distribution and status, but there is wisely less detail for the period covered by Ticehurst's book to which keen historians can refer. The author admits 301 species to the county list, this is an increase of 16 on Ticehurst's list after five species—Buffel-headed Duck, Red-breasted Snipe, Siberian Pectoral Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper and Pratincole—have been dropped as unacceptable. Of this total 114 breed regularly, 12 breed irregularly and 22 have not bred within the past 30 years, the remaining species are winter visitors, migrants or vagrants. This book is a worthy addition to the long line of county avifaunas.

B.L.S.

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